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"Fire away till your powder gives out. You can not hurt the Rock Rider of the Sierra."

THE ROCK RIDER; OR, THE SPIRIT OF THE SIERRA. A TALE OF THE THREE PARKS.

BY FREDERICK WHITTAKER.

Author of "The Red Rajah," "Knight of the Rubies," "Double-Death," etc.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARNING.

The appearance of the Rock Rider, as he sat on his mule at the top of the rock, was singularly weird and imposing. The sun was setting directly behind his back, and his whole figure stood out, black as jet, against the red glare.

Over his head, as if scenting the slaughter to come, with the wild instinct of its race, a black buzzard hovered; and several others could be seen winging their slow flight thither in the still evening air.

A Comanche chief aimed straight at the heart of the stranger, and pulled the trigger. The Rock Rider uttered a taunting laugh, as the bullet struck the shield and glanced off again.

"Too low, too low, good master chief," he shouted across the ravine, in hollow tones. "The sights of a Spencer rifle were never made for a clumsy Indian to understand. Beware of the Rock Rider's lance, for the priest blessed it to a mission of vengeance. The Comanche's race has been run."

Even as he spoke, three more rifles cracked, with better aim, for a ball from one of them passed through the tall cap and knocked it off.

A peal of laughter, louder than before, came from the grim stranger, as he shouted: "Fire away till your powder gives out. You can not hurt the Rock Rider of the Sierra. He laughs at the Comanche, and spits on the Cheyenne. Black Wolf is wanted in hell, to atone for the death of the white girl he slew in Texas three moons ago."

He cast down the long lance as he spoke, and Black Wolf, one of the Comanche chiefs, fell from his horse, dead, and pinned to the earth.

"The Rock Rider never sends lance twice," shouted the stranger. "Beware of your lives, for not one of ye shall return to the lodge of his tribe, if he is found in the Sierra to-night."

Then he stooped from his mule with hardly an effort, picked up his tall cap, which he set upon his head, and glared down on them. He sat calmly, exposed to the fire of all, the smoke curling up around

him from the lately discharged rifles, as if holding them all in utter contempt. In truth, the glare of the sun in their eyes, and the deceptive distance, made him a most difficult target.

A third time the Indians fired a volley, and a third time the wild Rock Rider laughed tauntingly, as he sat, statue-like, in the sunset.

"The bullet for me is not yet cast," he shouted back, in the same hollow tones as ever. "Let the chiefs heed my warning, and go back to their homes to-night."

The next moment he wheeled his mule around, and was gone, the edge of the precipice hiding him from view. The Indians looked at one another with awe-stricken faces.

"The man has been punished by the Manitou," said Red Lightning, in a low voice. "The Master of Life has clouded his brain, and cast the shadow of his wing over his head to protect him. Thrice did I aim for his heart, and thrice did the bullet fly wide, that never erred before."

"Let us return home," said Black Arrow, another chief. "The Manitou has guarded the Three Parks, as the chief of the Cheyennes told us."

"Not till we have killed the pale-face fools who have stolen in upon our ancient hunting-ground," said Red Lightning, doggedly. "If they can enter, so can we. What! Shall we let the squaws laugh at us when we come back and tell them that twenty chiefs of the Comanches fled from four hunters, who had never been in the mountains before? There are four scalps in yonder valley, and Red Lightning has sworn to have one of them. Let who will stay. I go forward."

He turned his spotted mustang as he spoke, and galloped down the pass into the valley of the South Park, just as the purple twilight began to deepen.

The other chiefs followed, as a matter of course, for although obedience on the war-path is wholly voluntary, yet the sentiments of pride and honor become equally binding under a renowned leader. And Red Lightning was one of the most renowned braves of his tribe. He had slain at different times six United States soldiers, and was girt with a perfect armory of revolvers from their spoils, besides wearing a saber.

But, though a skillful warrior, the mysteries of the white men's weapons were too much for him, and more than half of his revolvers were rusty and unloaded, or so much out of order as to be useless.

Still, he and his followers presented a formidable appearance as they rode into the valley on the trail of the four comrades who had entered it so gayly but a few days before, having, by wonderful luck, escaped danger so far.

The Indians kept themselves behind the shelter of a clump of trees, and went into camp, as the darkness grew on, without lighting any fires, simply hopping their horses and turning them loose.

It was too dark to follow the trail, and the chiefs spent their time in smoking the council-pipe.

Red Lightning alone stole off on foot up the valley, pausing to reconnoiter at the summit of every knoll.

CHAPTER V.

UNDER THE LIVE-OAK.

WHEN our four hunters heard the volleys which were fired at the wild Rock Rider, they were somewhat disturbed.

They had been so quiet hitherto in the paradise of the South Park that they had almost forgotten the dangers that surrounded them. Not one of them had ever been on the plains before, and their whole knowledge of Indians was derived from books, and from the degenerate specimens found in frontier towns.

Still they were all active, keen-eyed young fellows, used to war, splendidly armed, and really ran less danger than one might have supposed.

"Boys," said Jack Somers, "there's a row in the valley. What's to be done?"

"Stay here," said Frank Buford, coolly. "I'd like to see the force of Indians that can get us out of that tree, if we've a mind to defend ourselves. What do you say, Belcour?"

"I stay here," said the young Frenchman, firmly, "till I have solved the mystery of the Spirit of the Sierra. If the Indians come, I will soon send them packing back."

"How?" demanded Somers, a little incredulously. "Do you think that your shooting is so superior? You haven't shown it yet."

Somers was renowned for a specialty. That specialty was pistol-shooting. He glided in his proficiency, and was very jealous of any one who tried to dispute the palm in that.

Gustave Belcour smiled. "Nay, Jack, our best shot at a long range is old Carl here, and thou canst beat us all at the revolver. But I have a specialty, too. Behold it."

As he spoke he drew from his girdle a Colt's revolver, put it to his mouth, and, to all appearance, swallowed it.

"Jack Somers," cried a hollow voice, close behind the young man's head, at the same instant, "look out for your scalp."

The young fellow turned hastily round, startled out of his wits, and a high, squeaking voice overhead, in the branches of the live oak, again accosted him with the question:

"Does your mother know you're out?" Both Somers and Buford looked wonderingly round them, when Belcour burst out laughing.

"You see, boys, I have a specialty too. I've astonished you, and that's nothing to what I can do."

"Why, are you a conjuror?" asked both, in a breath.

"Pretty fair," returned Belcour, modestly; "enough to scare an Indian. You see that I always liked to amuse myself with magic, and finished up my education in

that line under Hartz, in New York. I thought it might prove useful to me here, and we shall soon see if it does not. I shall not be the least useful member of the firm yet, perhaps."

Brinkerhoff, who had not yet spoken, during the conversation was sweeping the line of the Sierra to the south with a powerful glass. He shut it up now, and quietly observed:

"Fellers, I fights mit you, bote I dinks ve haf mooh droobles. Dere ist swanzig Indians comen hier, and der teufel on der rocks fightin' mit dem. You looks for yourself."

Buford took the glass and pointed it to the place indicated by the German. He could distinctly see the weird figure of the Rock Rider, as he sat there, defying the Indians below.

He saw, too, the stranger riding away along the edges of precipices, among sharp rocks, as if he bore a charmed life, till the darkness and the mouth of a black canon swallowed him up together.

Then the four comrades held a short consultation, which ended in extinguishing their little fire, and taking to the shelter of the live-oak tree, where they secured their horses and retired to their respective nests for the night.

The four had resolved to set a guard, however, and Brinkerhoff offered to take the first tour of duty, accompanied by his learned dog, Yakop.

For some hours the German was quite undisturbed in his watch. He knew that the Indians were near, and had heard enough of their wiles to be suspicious of every sound.

Still he knew also that the secrecy of their retreat was likely to save them from discovery for that night at least, as the moon was finishing her last quarter, and the nights were very dark.

The hours wore on in silence, and Yakop was quietly reposing by his master's feet, when the watching hunter caught sight of a dark moving figure, standing out against the sky at the top of a knoll, not three hundred yards off.

It moved as silently as a ghost, but the keen eyes of Carl were not to be deceived.

The figure moved stealthily forward and halted at the summit of the knoll, revealing the plumed head-dress and long, flowing buffalo-robe of an Indian chieftain.

A moment before Carl had been been nodding at his post, but the sight was too novel to him and too startling to permit longer inattention. It was the first wild Indian he had ever seen.

Softly he laid his hand on Yakop's back, and the intelligent dog started up in a moment, without a whine or bark.

That he saw the Indian was evident from a certain stiffening of the back, and he kept his eyes intently riveted upon the savage.

The Indian remained on the summit of the knoll for a minute or more, peering round the valley. Then he turned and stalked away toward the Sierra at the eastern side.

Carl waited till he was out of sight behind the knoll, when he rose up and softly awakened his three companions, to whom he told what had happened.

The news woke them up effectually, and there was no more talk of sleeping that night.

That Indians were near them and on the alert was certain now. How many were near, was another question, and one hard to answer.

Silently they descended from their perches, and each man saddled his horse, leaving the bridle on the horn of the saddle.

There was nothing further to do then but to wait for morning, and keep a good look-out.

But when they came to look out over the valley, a circumstance was discovered which alarmed the four comrades exceedingly.

Yakop was gone.

In vain they looked around in all directions, and made low signals to attract the dog's attention. They dared not call aloud or whistle, for no one knew who might be near.

But all the care and search they could make was unrewarded. Yakop was undoubtedly missing.

"The stupid dog!" muttered Somers, wrathfully. "If the Indians catch sight of him, it's all up. They'll know he's a white man's dog, and follow him when he comes back. You ought never to have brought him here, Carl. He's only in the way."

"Don't you never mind 'bout Yakop," said Brinkerhoff, quietly. "You don't got so much sense as Yakop to-night, mein herr. Yakop he go off to see vere de Indians vos sleep, und Yakop he come back mit de news. You see fery soon, Shack."

"Mes amis," said Gustave Belcour, suddenly, "if a dog can do such things, we ought not to be behind. I'm going to take a look at the Indians myself. Stay here till I come back."

"Und I be going after Yakop," said Carl Brinkerhoff. "De leedle cuss might get into a fight und get ripped by dems Indians. So I goes to see after mein leedle dog."

And without more ado, the German and the Frenchman departed on their hazardous expedition, leaving the two cousins to defend the tree as they best might.

CHAPTER VI.
BELCOUR'S LUCK.

WHEN Gustave Belcour started on foot from the old live-oak tree where he and his companions had built their nest in safety, he had no very clear idea of where he was going. Had he been an American his native caution would have reminded him that union was strength, division weakness.

But Belcour was an impetuous Frenchman, young, brave to rashness, and endowed with a profound contempt for the Indians, a profound confidence in his own resources. All that he had seen of Indians, all that he had heard from the keep, self-reliant frontiersmen he had met, had made him think of the former as cowardly, degraded creatures, of whom a dozen were no match for a single determined white man.

Moreover, he relied on their superstition and his own tricks of magic to frighten them away, if they became too numerous.

Very rash, the reader will say. True, but fortune favors the brave, often when they don't deserve it.

Once away from the tree, Belcour advanced with a mingled boldness and caution that was very creditable to a man totally uneducated in wood-craft.

He kept in the hollows, between the different knolls, incessantly glancing up against the sky-line, on the watch for foes.

He moved slowly and noiselessly, his gun ready on full cock, a pair of revolvers in the belt, close to his hand.

For nearly a mile he saw nothing.

Then the snap of a dry stick in his immediate vicinity warned him that others were abroad.

Instantly the young man sunk down to the earth, where he was, and remained perfectly silent, listening intently.

For some moments not a sound disturbed the silence. If it were a wild animal that had made the noise, it must have halted, alarmed at its own carelessness.

If it were a human being the pause was just as significant.

Gustave Belcour waited, with suspended breath, his ear close to the ground, with a patience worthy of an old hunter.

Presently he distinguished a soft, almost imperceptible rustle. It was the sound of a moss-covered foot on damp grass.

It came from the other side of a knoll, at the foot of which he lay, and the knoll was crowned with a gigantic live-oak, with drooping branches.

By intent, breathless listening, he could ascertain that the steps were approaching the summit of the knoll.

Quietly he rose up to a kneeling posture, and prepared himself to exercise the art which he had studied so well.

In a moment more he was greeted with a view of the lofty plumes of an Indian warrior, rising over the summit of the knoll, as he had expected.

But there was more than that. To his surprise, mingled with apprehension, a score of dark forms rose up at the same instant, and all were Indians. There was a low murmur of voices, as if the newcomer was being greeted and questioned, and a great deal of silent gesticulation.

Then, too, for the first time, Belcour heard the snort of a horse on the other side of the knoll.

He realized that, without knowing it, he had stumbled on the very camp of the Indians who had come into the valley. They had been asleep till now, but their scout had returned. Would he be able to get off as quietly as he had come, now that the marvellously acute senses of the wild warriors were fully awake?

The cold sweat stood on his brow, as he mentally answered the question in the negative.

These fellows that he was looking at, were very different from the degenerate half-brutes he had seen lying drunk in the streets of Omaha.

In spite of his danger, Belcour could not help a thrill of admiration, as he surveyed the athletic and graceful forms of the Comanche chiefs, outlined against the sky.

There was not one that might not have served as a model for an Apollo, and their stately and dignified bearing toward each other, as the unseen watcher marked it, would have put to shame the most courteous gentlemen of civilization.

Plainly these were the real kings of the mountain and prairie, and had never suffered from white contact.

But Belcour knew well enough also that they nourished a hatred against his race that rendered it a hazardous place for him. He must get away from there somehow, and now was the time to try his art.

With a great effort he threw his voice into the tree, above the heads of the Indians, uttering, in English, the words:

"What are you doing here?"

The effect was immediate and surprising. The Indians recoiled from the common center, as if a shell had been dropped into their midst, and twenty weapons were ready in eager hands, pointing up into the tree.

Plainly they suspected an enemy just where he wished them, and the ventriloquist followed up the stratagem by a diabolical laugh, which he contrived to send into another part of the tree, at the further side of the knoll.

Instantly the flash and crack of a rifle was followed by the snapping of a bullet through the trees, in the very place where he had sent his voice.

Belcour repeated the laugh in the very same place, and then started up. As he had anticipated, half a dozen rifles followed suit, and several Indians caught hold of the branches to ascend and examine the tree.

Seizing the opportunity, with the marvellous quickness of the trained conjuror, the young man stole instantly off down the hollow, under cover of the noise and confusion, which prevented his foes from observing his footsteps, and very soon put a second knoll between him and the Indians.

He could hear them rattling the branches, and talking aloud together, with a want of caution strikingly unlike his own notions of Indian character, and which proved that they must have been greatly excited by the mysterious voice.

And then, of a sudden, every thing was quiet.

Belcour halted instantly, laid down, and listened.

For some time all was still, and then he heard the low, muffled tramp of a number of horses. Covered by that, he started up again, and stole off through the hollows, without any very clear idea of where he was going, except to get away from there.

The noise of trampling hoofs grew more and more distant, and the young Frenchman quickened his pace to a run, following

only the line of hollows, and keeping between the knolls.

As far as regarded concealment, it was a wise course. He remained perfectly invisible. But, unknowingly, every step took him further and further away from his camp, and when he rested at last, he found that he was in a part of the valley with which he was totally unacquainted, where the trees were much thicker, and where the only landmark he could recognize was the giant range of the Sierra, at whose foot he unexpectedly found himself.

The discovery was something of a shock to the young fellow.

Had he had his horse with him, it would have mattered less, but on foot, and being quite out of walking practice lately, he began to feel tired and helpless. Under the circumstances, he took a sensible course.

Ascending the mountain a little higher, where a belt of copice and timber clothed the spurs of the Sierra, he ensconced himself in a sheltered place, from whence he could see the whole of the valley, and silently awaited the coming of day.

He had not long to wait. His excursion had carried him over more ground, and through a longer period of time than he had calculated on; and already a faint, doubtful light began to steal over the landscape, the first precursor of coming day.

From his position, a little elevated above the valley, he could see nothing in the gloom below. The tactics of the vidette by night and by day are very different.

But he could hear, every now and then, the distant snort of a horse and the dull trampling of feet, that told him that the Indians were stirring about.

Gradually the light became stronger, and Belcour looked up the side of the mountains. Sharp and clear stood out the rugged tops against a sky that was already blushing pink with early dawn.

Below him the tramping continued, and after awhile he began to hear voices in low conversation. Still the light increased, and as he looked down, he saw the whole valley covered with a thick, white veil of mist, out of which the trees rose up like islands in a sea.

Belcour rose and went higher up the mountain. Where he was, every thing was bright and clear. Only the valley was obscured with mist. The young man reasoned correctly when he thought that the same mist would hide him from the observation of any one below.

He passed through the belt of copice, and emerged on the naked side of the mountain, at the edge of a steep, stony ravine, between two spurs of the chain, where a winter's torrent had hewn its pathway down the side of the ravine.

A few rocks formed a sort of natural breastwork, behind which, safe from observation, he could survey the valley. As he looked down and listened, the noise of horses' feet became quite plain on the greensward. The veil of white mist seemed to be thicker and thicker, as the light strengthened. Every now and then a breeze would send clouds of vapor rolling along, curling into various fantastic forms, and behind its curtain he could now hear voices quite plainly, calling to each other.

But the voices were not those of Indians. With a strange mingling of amusement and terror, he recognized his friends, the two cousins, Buford and Somers.

"*Et! Mon Dieu!*" muttered Belcour to himself; "but we are four fools, I must say. Here am I in one place, Brinkerhoff somewhere else, and Buford and Somers playing hide and seek in the fog below, as if a war-party were nowhere within hearing. Ah, ha! there comes the sun at last!"

As he spoke, a bright crimson glow tipped the summits of the sierra on the opposite side of the valley, and began to steal rapidly down over the rocks.

The white mist in the valley curled closer than ever.

Gustave Belcour turned away to look up the mountain side again, and the prospect was glorious. The sky was all aglow with scarlet and gold, and the rocks stood out as black as jet against it. Sharp pinacles of granite, like rows of needles, seemed to be too narrow to afford footing even for the mountain goat.

And yet, there, in the very center of the glow at the summit of the sierra, her statuesque form relieved against the sky, stood the same beautiful figure that he had seen the night before, the mysterious being that he only knew as the Spirit of the Sierra.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 145.)

Iron and Gold:

OR,
THE NIGHT-HAWKS OF ST. LOUIS.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "FLAMING TALISMAN," "BLACK CRESSANT," "WOODWIND," "HERCULES," "THE HUNCHBACK," "PEARL OF TEARS," "THE RED SCORPION," ETC.

CHAPTER X.
THE PAPERS BEHIND THE BOOKS.

"Why do you sneer?"

"Because he's drunk with wine?"

"Lend me an ear."

"Than either thine or mine."

"There's better, shrewder intellects, to-day, than that of drunkenness, though you do say 'tis denser.'"

THAT Doctor Theophilus Omnorram, with all his calmness of exterior, was not free of nervousness, was evident by the quick start he betrayed, when the sharp rap for admittance sounded on the door of his office.

But, immediately, he nodded his head, and said:

"Ah! yes. It's Jiggers—Jimmy Jiggers, my man—yes." As he spoke, he advanced to admit the comer, for, upon returning to the room, he had locked the door.

Rap! rap! rap—bang!

The party outside must have been leaning against the panel on which he thumped so loudly, for the moment Omnorram turned the key, the door whizzed open, and the individual shot in, with a reel, a pitch and a stumble, sprawling full length on the floor.

While he is lying there, let us take a look at him.

In stature, he was short; very narrow across the shoulders; bow-legged; a ball-like head; close-cropped and bristling hair; beardless face, with numerous pimples; a nose decidedly snub—on the end of which was a significant color, made more perceptible by the scrape it received when its owner fell.

He had been carrying a number of books, which now lay scattered in every direction.

After endeavoring to look straight, with a pair of ogle eyes, and seeming hugely astonished at his accident, he presently closed

those eyes, vented a grunt, and calmly remained where he was.

The physician stood contemplating him—one hand behind his back, switching his coat-tail, and the other smoothing his pointed chin.

Kearn arose from the sofa, and started to leave.

"I shall see you again, Doctor Omnorram."

Yes—again. "Um! Well, remember; the conditions, you know. Don't come to me any more, unless you are prepared to comply. Understand, friend Kearn?"

"I understand. Good-day."

"Good-day, sir."

Kearn looked at him keenly for a second, and then withdrew.

Theophilus Omnorram continued his survey of the prostrate form.

"Rascal!"

"Eh?" The ogle eyes flew open immediately.

"James Jiggers, you are drunk again."

"Drunk?" repeated Jiggers, with unmistakable thickness of accent.

"Yes, sir—you are drunk. I've a notion to carve your head off," laying one hand on a case of scalpels.

The threat brought Jiggers to a sitting posture, and he blinked idiotically at his employer.

"Get up."

"Yes, good master Doctor, I'll (hic) I'll get up," which he did, a variety of gyrations, and a series of unsteady scrambles.

Then he fixed his ogle eyes on the chair at the desk, toward which he presently dived, and threw himself into it with a jar that shook the room.

His chin sunk to his breast, the eyes closed again, and he began to snore.

Omnorram produced a small battery, and applied it to the nose of the intoxicated man—giving the crank a spiteful turn.

Jiggers slid to the floor, with a thump, and stared wildly upward.

"James Jiggers, I say you are drunk."

"No—I swear I am not, good master Doctor!" sputtered Jiggers, who was, indeed, rather sobered by the startling suddenness of the operation.

"Didn't I pick you out of the street, starving?"

"You did," whined the other, with a terrified glance at the battery.

"Didn't you promise to let intoxicating beverages alone, if I employed you?" grasping the crank again, and causing Jiggers to jump.

"I did—I did."

"I must cast you into the gutter again," pursued Omnorram, maliciously.

"I'll drink no more, I vow!" declared Jimmy.

"More. I'll put you down the hole in the back-room. You know the—"

"D-d-don't!" he squeaked, in affright.

"With the rats and skeletons," finished his tormentor.

"Good master Doctor!"

"Will you ever drink liquor?"

"Never, I vow!"

Omnorram left him to regain the chair in the best way he could, and turned to a portion of the shelving, where a few secret pigeon-holes were concealed behind the dusty books.

First rubbing the green spectacles with his handkerchief, he removed two or three books, and drew forth from one of the pigeon-holes a long, worn parchment.

Opening this, he began to read in silence.

"So—so," he muttered, presently; "the years go by, and the dates draw near, and still there is no claimant for the will. Ha! ha! ha!"—a low, jubilant chuckle. "Only a few more months, and Theophilus Omnorram will become the possessor of all mentioned herein—not a little, either. Ah! it was shrewd! very shrewd!"

He turned quickly, to glance at Jiggers.

That individual appeared to be asleep, and gave vent to an unusually loud snore, just as Omnorram wheeled around.

Satisfied that he was not watched, the physician resumed his perusal of the MS., and his mutterings.

"Calvert Mander did not dream how nicely I was going to get rid of him, after he made his will. And who would have dreamed that I could have imitated it so nicely—inserting a clause, providing, that in case Calvert Mander's heirs did not come forward in a certain time, then the whole bulk of benefit was to revert to me, his honorable friend. Ha! ha! ha! his honorable friend—when we hated each other like two cats with their tails tied together. Yes—yes, it has been solace to me, all these long years. Mander won from me the only woman I ever loved; and when he died, Wilbur Kearn put fresh gall into my life by marrying the widow, when I, still a little lap-dog at her feet, was seeking her smiles and encouragements. But, I am having my satisfaction—yes, satisfaction in both cases—a noble satisfaction. Ha! ha! ha! Much of this wealth passed into the wife's hands; then into Kearn's, when she died. People don't imagine that Wilbur Kearn, the exile, owns so much in this city, and has a goodly sum stored away at his little home! But I know it; and if—but, never mind. This will has never been known. 'Um! wait till the proper time. I'll use it—ha! ha! wait till the proper time.'"

Restoring the valuable paper to its hiding-place, he took up a broad-brimmed slouch hat, from the desk, and advanced to the door. But, after going out and closing the door, he opened it again, and thrust his head in, to look at Jiggers.

The latter was, apparently, more soundly asleep than ever.

But when fully assured that Doctor Omnorram was gone, James Jiggers opened his eyes, and started upright. The effects of his recent drinking were no longer visible.

He listened intently for a while; then he approached the shelving, at the spot where his employer had been.

"If he catches me, I am as good as dead! He's awful. He'd give me a dose of fish-hooks, and put me down the hole. Ugh! it's a horrid hole," with a shiver. "Hist! Jiggers—beware. Take courage. Your curiosity is wonderful; it will one day put your head in a noose, and your body in a grave. Graves? Ugh! Take courage, Jiggers—take courage," his voice sinking to a whisper.

And the "courage" was contained in a small flask, which he produced from a side pocket and applied to his lips, while his eyes rolled.

When the flask was put away, he pushed up his sleeves, and with the ogle eyes widened to their fullest extent, began cautiously to remove the books on the shelf.

"Spring-guns, hand-traps, batteries!" he muttered, whisperingly. "Jim Jiggers, look out."

The task was not without its personal danger—that he knew; and his fingers trembled as he proceeded. For Theophilus Omnorram, knowing of the fellow's curious, prying nature, had set a number of traps—some of them working on his superstitious mind. But Jiggers was not yet cured. He wanted to see what was so carefully concealed behind the books.

The skull, on the wire, had received a fresh impetus from some source, and was now turning swiftly round and round, much to his disgust and uneasiness.

Soon the books were displaced. Slowly he drew out the parchment he had seen in his employer's hands—though Omnorram had failed to detect him at his spying.

Jiggers unfolded the MS. as if he expected a snake to dart out of it; then he began to read.

While thus engaged, the door opened noiselessly, and a face peered in.

It was the face of the mulatto girl whom he had seen in a previous chapter.

He did not perceive her. His back was toward her.

He was making an important discovery, and read on, absorbedly.

"Aha! Aha!" a shrill, whispering exclamation. "I'm Jiggers, the drunkard, eh?—Jiggers, the sot! I'm a fool, and a dog!—a football for my good master Doctor! Oh-o! what a little secret! James Jiggers, remember this!—remember this!"

CHAPTER XI.

FAREWELL TO HOME!

"The conflict is over, the struggle is past, I have looked—I have loved—I have worshiped my last!"

And now back to the world, and let Fate do On the heart that for thee such devotion hath nursed."—HOPFMAN.

ZELLA looked pale and tired when she sat at the tea-table with her father.

The rosy bloom had deserted her cheeks; her eyes were downcast; she missed the gay, chattering voice that had been wont to enliven their meals together.

But Wilbur Kearn was too preoccupied with thoughts of his own, to notice the remarkable change in her demeanor.

At an early hour Zella retired to her room—not to sleep, but to sob out her bitterness of soul.

"Oh, Hugh!" she would murmur, as she sat by her window, looking out through her tears at the starry sky; "I never knew what love was till you came to me. And now—now when I have learned the lesson so well, you tell me of barriers—tell me we can never marry! If you only knew how unhappy you have made me! But I can not hate you for it—no, I love you still; and I will always think kindly of you, though you have nearly broken—my—heart!"

Fresh tears; the sobs grew deeper, as if every thought of him whom she loved so dearly was adding newer weight to this flow of grief.

But, her nature was not all gold alone. There was iron, too, in that affectionate heart; for, soon she checked her weeping, and half started from her seat.

"I must leave here!" she exclaimed, low and breathless. "I must go at once! Oh! it will drive me mad to stay where he has been so often. Yes—at once—to-night. Am I turning crazy?—I can't help it! I must go—go away!"

She stole to the door, and, partially opening it, listened there for several seconds.

Pa has gone to bed. I will not wake him. Then, too, he would not permit my departure. And I must, I must go! Another day here would kill me! I will write him a note, and he will not worry. I'll go to aunt Jane. I must leave this place!"

It was a sudden excitement that brought the color back to her white face, and made her grip the pen nervously, as she seated herself at the table to write.

Perhaps she was wrong in doing what she was about to do. But the question of right and wrong was far from her high-distorted brain, just then.

She only knew that to see about her, as of old, those lovely spots with whose attractions Hugh Winfield was associated, would be a constant gall, a source of never-ending misery to her; for they had roamed together, so often, round the cottage and its adjacent nooks, till now every breath would seem to whisper his name, every flower remind her of some speech or action of his.

The must leave the scene of these reminders; and an inward prompting cried:

"At once! At once!"

When the note was finished, she left her room, and crossed the hall.

Slipping the tiny sheet under the door of her father's bedchamber, she returned to her own apartment to prepare hastily for the flight.

It did not take her long to change her attire, adjust the "cute hat" over the clustering curls, and throw a light shawl over her shoulders.

Then, snatching her little purse from its place in the bureau-drawer, she stole swiftly and noiselessly away.

Down the stairs—feeling, with every step, as if she must cry out the pain caused by her very act; yet on, smothering regrets in her great desire to escape those surroundings which would constantly bring back to memory the man through whose fault she was so utterly despairing.

She had resolved to forget him—not hate, or even blame him; but let him vanish from her mind, as if it were but a waking to sad reality after pleasant dreams.

On the lawn, beside a rose-bush—the very spot on which, that afternoon, she had parted with him, and felt, in the separation, the sweetest hope of her young life fade out—she paused, involuntarily.

In the dim starlight, she gazed around her.

"Good-by! Good-by!" fell from her quivering lips. "Birds, flowers, once-happy life—good-by! Good-by, Hugh! Farewell to my—my mad dream of love! I may find other scenes as beautiful as those around you, dear home—but never, never the joys that have been mine, even in this solitude. There is no life sweet as that of the past!—no dream so full of gold! Yet I must forget you—forget you all. Dear home—good-by!"

She hurried off down the narrow path, without one look behind, and wiping the tears from her eyes—tears that would gush from the weary lids, despite her greatest effort at self-mastery.

Her heart nearly burst, it was so full, as she began to realize what she was doing.

But on, on, without a pause; and soon she was tramping the dusty path on the roadside, turning her steps toward the distant city.

Had Zella but known what a train of

events were to ensue upon this injudicious, yet, to her, necessary flight!

Had she but glanced into her father's room, when she pushed the note beneath the door!

The hour was still and ominous. Night was slowly melting away in morning.

A solitary figure was walking, weary and timid, along Twenty-first street—a female.

Soon she halted before a private dwelling, and grasped the railing, as if about to ascend the steps; but then she paused, and glanced up at the darkened windows.

"How thoughtless in me!" she exclaimed. "They are all in bed—and I must not wake them. I wouldn't like anybody to wake me up, at this hour of the night. And yet I'm so tired, I— Ah!" She turned frightenedly, as the sound of a measured step fell upon her ears.

A policeman was approaching. Already he had seen her; and the watchful guardian of the peace was giving her all the benefit of ready suspicion, as he drew near.

Zella—for it was she—advanced toward him.

"Will you please direct me to a genteel boarding-house?—or a hotel?" she inquired, with some hesitation.

"Boardin'-house?" he repeated, coming to

Thump! Thump! Thump! went the pestle again.

The physician now poured in the liquid from the vial.

Instantly, a flame shot upward, singeing Jiggers' eyebrows. The pestle dropped; he fell to the floor as if knocked down.

"Good master Doctor! Lord!—ho-o-o!"

A half scream, half shout.

While engaged at the mortar, Jiggers did not notice that his employer had washed his face in a dark solution. Now, as he looked up from his recumbent position, he uttered a cry of horror, and shivered as with an ague—for Onnorann's face was black as a cloud at midnight.

"James Jiggers," he said, very solemnly, while the orbs in the green spectacles glittered ominously.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Jiggers, shutting his eyes tightly.

"James Jiggers, you have too much curiosity."

"No, good master Doctor, I have none at all."

"You have, I say!"

"Yes—I have, I have," with a mournful whine.

"I am the doctor's deputy, sent to cure you. I must put out your eyes, and carve out your ears! I must vaccinate your nose, and draw out your finger-nails!"

"D-o-n't!" he screamed.

"You must drink corrosive sublimate, and hang by your heels till your hair grows longer. I must cut off your head and take out your brains."

Jiggers interrupted him with a howl, and opened his eyes in very terror.

"Lord! Oh! Lord help me!"

"And all because you pryed out what was behind the books on the shelf."

"I'm a dead man!" he wailed, in hopeless despair. "Oh! Oh! good master Doctor—don't! I'll never have any curiosity any more—e!"

His short hair was standing on end; again the eyes closed in a redoubled prostration of fright, for the physician stooped down and gripped him by the collar.

"Will you swear, on penalty of being fed to the imp, that you'll never tell anybody what you know?—what you have found out?—what you—?" but he paused, before he finished, before Jiggers could give vent to the premature declaration of utter silence for the future, which bubbled and gasped from his lips.

There was a heavy footfall in the entry without. Onnorann listened.

Rap! came a summons on the door—a single knock, loud and imperative; and the grip on Jiggers' shoulder tightened.

Between the rap and the grip, the frightened man in the white body and crooked limbs all shook simultaneously.

"See who it is," said Onnorann, releasing him.

"I can't get up!"—a shivering whisper.

"I'm too weak."

"Get up—if you don't want me to swallow you!"

Jiggers scrambled to his feet, and stood limply on the bow-legs that quaked and bent underneath him, while his face was wrinkled and woeful.

"I am going into the back room. Admit whoever it is, and bid them be seated. Rap! rap! came another summons, this time impatient and quick.

Onnorann hastened into the adjoining room, to wash the stain from his face. Jiggers wriggled unsteadily over to the door, and admitted the comer.

It was Calvert Mander.

"Where is Doctor Theophilus Onnorann?" he demanded, frowning.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 143.)

Death-Notch, the Destroyer;

OR,
THE SPIRIT LAKE AVENGERS.

BY OLL COOMES,
AUTHOR OF "HAWKEYE HARRY," "BOY SPT,"
"IRONSIDES," "THE SCOT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ATTACK.

NIGHT again fell over the land. The moon was not yet up for it was early.

Camp-fires dotted, like twinkling stars, the dark valley in which was located the village of Inkpaducuh. Tall, dusky figures were strolling about the camp, wrapped in blankets and robes. Others reclined in groups about the fires, smoking and talking. They did not feel entirely secure there in that valley, which seemed to have been created for their especial favor. They had not forgotten the phantom horsemen of the night previous, nor that Death-Notch had been in their camp and slain a warrior.

Double guards had been posted around the valley, and every point of approach made, as they believed, impregnable.

As the hours wore on, a number of the warriors sought their couches, while others sat about the waning camp-fires and talked and sung, in a wild, riotous manner.

Suddenly they were startled by a sound. It was the sound of a human voice, and it was a white man's voice. It was within the valley, and was approaching their camp. How an enemy could have gained admission to their stronghold unseen, was a mystery to the savages.

They bent their ears and listened. The voice was coming nearer, and they could hear that it was singing a sprightly air. There were whites among the savages, who had heard that voice before, and recognized the words he was singing. They ran thus:

"The possum he grained at the ole hedgehog,
At the ole hedgehog, the ole hedgehog;
The possum he grained at the ole hedgehog,
Way down by the Squantum river."

Then from the gloom beyond the radius of the camp-fires issued a long, cadaverous-looking white man, whose rapid strides soon carried him into the midst of the astonished red-skins.

"Hullo, my beauties!" exclaimed the bold intruder, with apparent indifference: "how goes it, enny how? Dull times out here in Nebraska, ain't it? Skulps and whisky are purty skeerse, I trow, eh, love-lies?"

The savages sprung to their feet and flocked around the daring pale-face, giving vent to various exclamations of curiosity and mistrust.

"Stand a leetle back, here, idiots!" yelled the old hunter, as they gathered too close about him to feel at ease; "did ye ever see a white gentleman afore? I'm not a see-hoss, nor a Benolly tiger, but I'm Old Shadler, Esquire, and I'll flit across yer vision, fust thing ye know, ye gapin' knaves."

"Ugh!" ejaculated an Indian; "ole rattle-tongue—heap talk—no sense."

"Be cautious, red-skin, how ye handle yer words, or I'll spot ye. I'm here on business, and don't want to idle words with you common herd. Trot out yer ole chief, as I wish to give him a bit o' advice."

"Waugh! the chief is here," said Inkpaducuh, pushing his way through the circle of savages and confronting the old hunter with a haughty scowl. "Let the pale-face say what he has to say."

"Whew! A little crusty!" ejaculated the hunter, softly; "but then, ole hoss, I'm here on business. I hear you have got some white captives here; some you took at Spirit Lake, and some at other places."

"What is that to the pale-face?" demanded the chief.

"I want 'em, and now if ye'll jist trot 'em out and let us leave in harm's way, why, I'll say no more 'bout it, and ye'll save ye're ole hide o' gittin' a hole punched through it, mebbey."

A contemptuous smile swept over the face of the chief, and there was a vindictive gleam in every savage eye.

"The pale-face is a fool," returned the chief, "to think that Inkpaducuh will accede to his demands. Not even the pale-face hunter shall ever leave our village alive."

"Bah! Git out; ye're laborin' under an orful mistake. Unless ye release the hull kit o' prisoners in yer hands, be they red or be they white, and that within ten minutes, your village will run red with blood, and scalp will fly like snow-flakes, now mind ye."

"The pale-face speaks as though he was a host."

"I am a tough ole coon, Inky, and can whallop, at least, half a dozen scow rats as you are, but then, my ole dear, I've over two hundred friends waitin', this blessed minit, to open fire on your little burg."

"The pale-face's tongue is crooked; he lies."

"That's it!" ejaculated the hunter. "I ailers her luck o' gittin' called a crooked-tongue, in spite o' my great regard for the trool; but then, I never have swallered the lie, nor, be cussed, if I will!"

As the last two words fell from the old hunter's lips, his fist was planted fair between the chief's eyes. The red-skin fell to the earth as though he had been shot, while a cry of triumph, that was almost deafening, pealed from the old hunter's lips.

Then, from out the darkness along the base of the hills, within the village, arose another yell, that was mingled with the crash of fire-arms and the flutter of over two hundred pairs of feet, as they came swimming into the village.

Old Shadler's words had proven true. The enemies of the Sioux, the Omahas, the Sacs, the Foxes, and the Spirit Lake Avengers, were upon them.

The Sioux were taken completely by surprise, but they soon recovered from the first shock, and gave battle, and then began a terrible struggle in the very heart of the village.

The eight Avengers stood together, and, side by side, fought their way to the prison-lodge. Here ensued a sanguinary struggle, but the whites and their red friends were victorious, and succeeded in forcing their way into the lodge.

They found several captives therein, one of whom was Martha Gregory. The others were all young women, and the affecting scene that followed the entrance of the Avengers into the lodge, told that their coming had not been in vain, for there most of them found a captive friend. However, there were but a few short moments in which to exchange words of love and greeting; but, in the meantime, Death-Notch learned from the lips of Martha Gregory that Vida and Sylvene had not been captives there at all—that they were not in the village.

With crushed hopes and bleeding heart, Ralph bade his companions follow him with their friends, and they at once began their retreat from the village. The allied savage forces were gradually pressing the Sioux back toward the eastern side of the town, therefore our white friends had but little difficulty in gaining the cover of the forest on the western side of the place, making their exit from the valley through a narrow defile which the Sioux guards had deserted to join in battle.

Here those of the Avengers that had found friends, were enabled to obtain a few minutes' talk with each other.

"And you are sure, Miss Gregory," said Fred Travis, "that Sylvene Gray has not been in this village?"

"I am certain of it," replied Martha; "the last I saw of Sylvene was on the night I was captured."

Fred groaned in spirit, and turning to Death-Notch, said:

"Ralph, I am afraid Sylvene and Vida have been slain."

Ralph made no reply, but the silence that followed told that he was terribly agitated, and for a moment Fred was afraid he could not restrain his emotions.

The conflict lasted several moments in the village. The Sioux, however, were finally driven from their stronghold and compelled to seek refuge among the rocks and undergrowth at the base of the hills on the east side of the village, where the women and children had already gone.

The allied victors now fired the wigwags, and with a number of horses, several prisoners and some plunder, they began their retreat from the valley, guided by the light of the burning town.

The victory had been a decisive one, and forever broke the power of Inkpaducuh. And the allied tribes felt that their disaster of a few months previous had been nobly avenged, and with their prisoners and plunder, at once set off on their homeward journey.

The night of the battle, however, the eight Avengers camped in the forest with their red friends, and on the following morning they separated, each party taking its own course.

The Avengers turned their footsteps toward Stony Cliff, most of them feeling happy over the rescue of their friends. Fred Travis and Ralph St. Leger, however, were sad at heart. They feared, and in fact every thing went to confirm their fears, that the objects of their hearts had been slain; yet they entertained a faint hope that the girls might have escaped and returned to Stony Cliff. If not, they must have perished in the woods.

At noon the party made a few minutes' halt. Travis and St. Leger stood aside talking about Sylvene and Vida, for they were never out of their minds a minute, and the agony of fear and suspense was growing upon them. They became restless in spirit and mind. Their conversation was

finally interrupted by the approach of Martha Gregory, who asked a moment's conversation with them. It being readily granted, she asked:

"When did you last see Sylvene and Vida, Mr. St. Leger?"

Ralph told her, and on learning that they had been together after her—Martha's—capture, a suspicion entered her mind in an instant.

"Then," she said, "if your cabin was attacked on the night of their disappearance, I am satisfied the Indians never took them. I have a suspicion of where they are, if alive."

"Where? where?" exclaimed the youths.

"In the den of Pirate Paul."

A cry of bitter agony burst from their lips. They would much rather have known the girls were captives in the power of the Indians than in power of the robbers.

"Then they are lost!" exclaimed young Travis, "for the den of Pirate Paul, you know, has barred all our attempts to find it. St. Leger, this is awful, torturing, agonizing. What shall we do?"

"Search for them, Travis—search, until we are gray."

"You need have no uneasiness, young men, in regard to the whereabouts of Pirate Paul's den. Within an hour after we reach Stony Cliff, I will lead you into his den!"

"You are jesting, surely, Miss Gregory!" exclaimed Fred, half-hopefully.

"I am not. I have been within the robber's den. I have kept its location a secret for reasons of my own. But, I shall do so no longer."

"Then there is some hope of saving them yet," said St. Leger, "if poor little Vida has not fretted her life away."

"God grant that they are both alive and unharmed, Ralph! But, let us not tarry here too long. Every moment may be of great importance."

The next minute, almost, they were mounted and moving at a rapid pace over the great, green ocean of prairie.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ROBBERS' HIDDEN RANCHES IS FOUND.

THE retreat of Inkpaducuh and his warriors from the valley of the Sioux, gave the settlers of Stony Cliff some assurance of future peace; not only from the savages, but also from the robbers, who would now have no immediate source of protection when closely pressed, nor succor in time of need—when a large settlement or emigrant train was to be plundered.

The greatest sorrow, however, had fallen upon the settlement in consequence of the mysterious disappearance of Sylvene Gray and Martha Gregory.

Settlers had not a doubt but that the girls had been captured and carried away by the Indians, but every attempt toward rescuing them had proved unavailing. At last, Scott Shirely and several of his hunter employees in the fur business volunteered to go in search of them. They went, and, after several days' absence, returned without any tidings of the missing maidens. But had the honest-hearted settlers once suspected that Scott Shirely was Pirate Paul, and that his employees were his followers, they would have also suspected them of spying the maidens away, instead of returning them. But they never dreamed that such an apparent gentleman as Scott Shirely could be guilty of such wickedness, for he had worked his ropes so cunningly and quietly that there was no opening for any suspicion.

Elated over their success in this deceiving the settlers, Shirely and his men grew less fearful of their den being discovered.

On the night following that of Pirate Paul's departure from the Indian village, the robbers were in their den, drinking freely and talking over their late adventures. But there were several vacant chairs in the ranch. Death had been in the ranks of the freebooters since we last saw them in council in their stronghold.

They wore no masks, for they no longer entertained fears of any one happening into their ranch, and recognizing them before they could make their escape.

"Well," said Pirate Paul, "our four friends that were slain during our expedition were good boys, and I feel the loss of them greatly. But, then, we have made the settlers believe they fell in the search for the girls, and so, after all, we have gained something by their death. It is a good thing, too, that we got rid of that Martha Gregory, or she would have blowed us higher than Gilderoy's kite."

"Who was she, anyhow, Cap?" asked one of his men.

"Well, she thinks she is my wife. I got an old humbug of a preacher to go through the ceremony when I was over in Canada. The little fool thought it was all right, but when I got tired of her, I dropped her into the St. Lawrence river, and supposed I was entirely rid of her, and, as her husband, that I would inherit the vast little fortune to which I knew she was heir. But, the old saying of a bad penny returning, has been verified in my case. However, I think she is safe now where she will give me no further trouble. It appears that El Pardou, the chap we came Death-Notch on, was a cousin of hers, and a spy upon our track."

"Good thing we hung the traitor when we did," said Griff Morton.

"Yes," and the settlers believe to this day that Death-Notch slew him," said Finchley, the spy.

"Well, let's try and keep them thinkin' so; but wouldn't I give a land title in Jerusalem to know who Death-Notch is," said another.

"You may know, to your sorrow, soon enough, old fellow," laughed Pirate Paul; "but, I am satisfied as to who Death-Notch is. In the first place, he is the son of that rich fellow that came from the south about two or three years ago, and whom I succeeded in getting into the clutches of old Inkpaducuh. You know, after I got him into the country, I took a number of Indians and captured the whole family. The old man we killed, but the mother, two daughters and a son we carried captives to the village. The mother and her oldest daughter the Indians worked to death, and the youngest girl and the son they adopted. But, after awhile they escaped, and that boy I believe is Death-Notch, and the lord of the little hut where we first saw that dark-eyed girl that played on the guitar. They have grown older and changed considerably since I last saw them, but then I know they are the children of that Southerner, Homer St. Leger. I suppose the boy has determined to wreak vengeance on those that spoilt their fun in the north, but—"

"He seems to be doing it, too," interrupted one of the robbers.

"Yes; I reckon, however, he has forgotten the face of Le Subtile Fox, for I was disguised then. I wish now I had the ring I took from his mother, and gave to that young baby-face, Martha Gregory, as she calls herself. It was a very costly ring, and would look very nice on the snowy finger of her daughter, whom I propose to wed."

"Hut!" suddenly exclaimed one of the robbers; "I was sure I heard a footstep."

"Fancy, fancy, Finchley," said Pirate Paul; "you're getting nervous."

"I tell you I did hear a footstep!"

"Then search the cavern," replied the captain.

Finchley arose to obey, and while he is engaged in his search, let us change the scene for a few minutes to another point.

CHAPTER XL.

WITHIN THE ROBBERS' DEN.

ON the same night that the robbers were in their den in consultation, a party of nearly twenty persons went into camp on the banks of the Sioux river, about five miles above Stony Cliff.

It was the eight Avengers and the friends they had rescued from the Indians. They could easily have reached the settlement that night by a little after dark, but they had no desire to do so. They had a mission to perform under cover of that night—before it became known in the village that Martha Gregory was safe.

Their horses being secured, and two of the Avengers left to take care of the females, the rest of the men, guided by Martha Gregory, set off down the river toward Stony Cliff.

They traveled on in silence, and when the village appeared in sight on the bluffs outlined against the southern sky they came to a halt.

A scout was now sent forward to make some reconnaissance, and in the course of half an hour he returned.

"How is it, Omaha—all quiet?"

"Yes, the settlers are asleep. No one is abroad."

"Then we may as well continue our journey," said Miss Gregory.

And so they moved on, and soon entered a narrow foot-path that wound along the river bank at the base of the bluffs. It was a difficult path to follow in the dark, but, by carefully picking their footsteps, they finally found themselves opposite the village, and in the pathway leading up the acclivity from the river to the cabins.

"Now which way, Miss Gregory?" asked Death-Notch.

"A few steps further on," was the woman's response; "but we can not reach the place on foot for that projecting ledge. But there are two canoes that we can use."

The canoes were unfastened and the little party at once entered them. They then turned down the stream, and running around a projecting point of the bank, turned in shore again and landed.

Martha again took the lead, and with the assistance of the vines and bushes that grew from the face of the cliff, the party began ascending the acclivity. Up about fifty feet from the water's edge they came to a halt on a narrow table-rock.

Long parasites and moss hung like a curtain down the face of the cliff above them. Martha Gregory parted this curtain at a certain point, and said:

"There, gentlemen, is one of the entrances to the den of Pirate Paul."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Travis, in an undertone, "then it is directly under Stony Cliff!"

"Yes," replied Martha, "and the main entrance—to one at which the robbers usually enter—is in the very heart of the village. It is under the large building occupied by the fur company. A trap-door in the cabin opens into that passage."

"This beats me!" said St. Leger; "it is strange the settlers never found it out. But I feel satisfied now the girls are in this den."

"We will soon know. Follow me," said Martha Gregory.

"Are you sure you understand the place?"

"Perfectly. My friend, El Pardou, showed me all through the place once when the robbers were away."

"Then lead the way, and we will follow."

Martha glided into the dark opening, closely followed by the Avengers.

In her hand she carried a piece of fungus or decayed wood—known in border lore as *fox-fire*—whose dull glow enabled her companions to follow on without difficulty.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 136.)

Mordaunt's Bride.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

HE sat by the silver-barred grate, watching the red flames as they crept among the pieces of shining coal.

He was a rich young fellow—you knew that by his surroundings, for a finer place than Mordaunt Lodge could not be found in the country over; he was quite good-looking, at least sufficiently so to have never earned the title of *augst* else; he was aristocratic, and used to all the luxuries and extravagancies around him; one could tell that after the first glance at him, wearied and annoyed as he looked, just then, sitting and smoking, and staring meditatively at the fire.

He had just come home to Mordaunt Lodge the evening before, from a ten years' wandering in the Holy Land; came home to all the splendor and welcome that awaited him, not because he prized either welcome or splendor, but because he was sickened of travel, and new faces and strange sights.

Not that there were familiar faces around Mordaunt Lodge to greet him; he had been away too long for that. Children had grown to be young married folks, and young matrons were elderly ladies, while, truth to tell, Chauncey Mordaunt had even forgotten their names.

It must not be supposed, however, that a gentleman possessed of such wealth and position in society as Chauncey Mordaunt was without friends, especially old friends. During his travels he had found numerous acquaintances, many of whom were continued and strengthened by correspondence. And now, that he had returned to Mordaunt Lodge, he intended giving a grand reception, not only to these friends of his, who, long before him, had returned to their homes near New York, but to the gentry immediately about him.

On this evening, as he sat before the grate in his library, he was thinking of two young ladies in particular, whose names were written on two of the envelopes that contained invitations.

One was Pearl Graham; the other Lu Summers; and Chauncey Mordaunt, with the conceit that such men as he can scarcely avoid entertaining, was wondering which of them would succeed in winning him—and Mordaunt Lodge.

He was just a little in love with both of them, and not much in love with either; while, faulty though he was, his heart often yearned for some one, who would be to him, for himself alone, and to whom he would be, all and in all.

"Lu, was ever any thing so perfectly splendid as Mordaunt Lodge? Such parks and drives, and such furniture!"

Pearla Graham's voice was full of enthusiastic admiration as she spoke to Miss Summers, who, in white alpacas toilette wrapper, and unbound hair, sat reading in an arm chair.

Then Lu's big black eyes were raised from her book.

"Do not omit the silver, Pearl, and those darling white ponies in your catalogue—and Mr. Mordaunt himself."

"Last and least?" laughed Miss Graham, flushing lightly.

"I am not so sure of that—Fay!" and Lu turned suddenly to a quiet, slight-built girl, who was half-hidden among the white lace draperies of the oriel window.

In answer to the call, a pair of large, luminous eyes, of softest, purest hazel, sought Lu's flashing black ones.

"I was not listening. What did you ask me?"

A passingly sweet voice, modulated to a tone it was.

"We were discussing Mr. Mordaunt, Miss Drummond. Question: are not all his lady guests in love with him?"

Pearla laughed as she spoke.

"I really can not say," returned Fay, gravely. "For myself I can easily answer. I do not think I ever could marry, much more love, such a gentleman as Mr. Mordaunt."

"Oh—oh! Fay Drummond!"

"Understand me, please, Miss Summers. I certainly like Mr. Mordaunt very well, and for a passing friend he suits admirably. But, I never would dare trust all my happiness in his hands—and my husband would be every thing and all things to me."

Pearla and Lu looked in astonishment at this girl, who, gentle-voiced and lady-like as she was, was the first and only one they ever had known who had dared speak so fearlessly.

A little sneer curled Pearl's lip.

"I am sure Mr. Mordaunt is my ideal, to perfection. Why, Miss Drummond, there would be no end to the elegant dresses and jewelry; there would be one continuous round of gayety and pleasure, and then to possess such a *distingue*, aristocratic husband!"

Fay listened courteously, and Lu

THE RESCUE.

BY HAP HAZARD.

A shriek of terror wild—a scream
That curls the blood with a nameless chill,
A circling wave on the gliding stream,
And bubbles white, and breathless still!

"Oh, God! My little child! My child!"
A mother cries in white-lipped woe;
And fills her eye with an anguish wild,
That only mother-heart can know.

The dark stream rolls relentlessly by;
Its foam-capped billows curl with scorn;
No heed it gives to the heart-broke cry
Of agony or its waters borne.

But, see! on the wildly-tossing wave—
See! golden locks and a snow-white hand!
Help! Help! Oh, God! Is there none to save—
To bring her back to the firm, bright land?

How pale the cheek at the dangers there!
For death doth lurk in each curling crest,
Of that craven throng not one will dare
To part the wave with a dauntless breast.

The tide takes back its prize again—
Back to its heartless, cold embrace;
The hand goes down in the tossing main,
And the golden locks, and the still, white face.

But, hark! on the air there swells a sound!
'Tis the baying of her playmate deep,
And out of the cope with a mighty bound,
And into the wave with a fearless leap!

He spins the tide from his nervous breast;
He lifts his shaggy head on high;
And over the heaving, watery waste,
In a searching glance, goes his fiery eye.

Again to the warm, glad sunshine come,
From the depths whose horrors none may know,
Mid the drifting weeds and the wind-tossed foam,
Those golden locks and that hand of snow.

With a loud, glad cry doth the faithful hound
To the side of his drowning playmate dash,
Where the water's wildest eddies sound,
And louder still is their angry lash.

Then out to the glad, warm sunshine come,
From the depths whose horrors none may know,
From the drifting weeds and the wind-tossed foam,
Those golden locks and that hand of snow.

And the tide gives back its prize again—
Back from its heartless, cold embrace;
The hound brings up from the tossing main,
Those golden locks and that still, white face.

And straight in the mother's lifeless arms
Is laid her child, from the grave snatched out,
And lips late sealed by dread alarms
Make the welkin ring with a gladsome shout.

The mother wakes from her deathlike swoon,
And lifts her head from the cold, damp sod,
And clasps her child, "For this precious boon,
She murmurs low, "thank God! thank God!"

"And next to him, to thee, brave hound,
Doth my heart go out for my darling saved!"
And she clasps his neck with her white arms
Round his shaggy head by her tears isaved.

Proved True.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

Not a dollar she could call her own, and no one in the world to whom she could turn for help. No wonder poor, helpless little Allie Verne shivered in the late fall sunshine, and glanced down at the idle hands folded across her black dress—dainty, delicate hands which had never been sullied or roughened by any of the toil of life. She had been as a "lily of the fields" before this, and now the rock of her protection, the almost unwisely tender guardian of all her years, was taken away, and she was left alone—quite alone in all the great, wide world.

She shrank and shivered at the thought. She had none of the elements which go to make up a heroine; to face poverty in a hand-to-hand struggle filled her with dismay. She was so used to dependence—why, she had scarcely even dressed herself before this blow fell.

Why, oh, why had not aunt Verne educated her to be more than a butterfly, sporting in the sunshine, which could only droop and die when cold winds blew upon it? Poor aunt Verne! who had always meant to make her will in this little one's favor, but had dallied and shrunk from the disagreeable task until it was too late. And little Allie was to go out from the great, grand house which had always been her home, with its broad acres of mellow lands about it, and the russet woods lying in background, the wind bearing the whisper of the leaves to her ears in melancholy cadence.

There had been a fluttering, expectant hope during the month she was permitted to remain in the old home, but even that had gone from her now. The one refuge which she had thought might open to her had proved like all the rest; she had waited and waited in vain for Guy Seymour's coming. Guy Seymour, who had breathed all those tender rhapsodies into her willing ear which only a lover's tongue can utter, whose dark face and great soft eyes had reflected all the unutterable tender things which only lovers feel. It was always the way—riches, and friends, and love had all taken flight together. Little Allie's knowledge hitherto had been gathered from the select novels whose entrancingly-mournful descriptions she had dreamily pored over, and the romance of fiction intermixed even now with all the stern reality of fact in a manner to cast an indistinct haze about even the one practical conclusion she had arrived at—that something must be done, and that it devolved upon herself to do it.

All the romance was destined to fade away and the stern fact stand bare enough before the something was done. Allie, with her one little closely-packed trunk, went cityward, with the proceeds brought by the sale of her wardrobe all that intervened between her and absolute starvation; and the thin shoes wore thinner and shabby, the sad, wan face grew sadder, paler, and the last resource in the meager purse had been eked out before the chance of occupation she had set herself in search of occurred to her. Numberless rebuffs she had received in that long, weary search. She was such a timid little thing that she could not push herself into notice, and she took the slight put upon her so meekly that no one would have suspected how sore and heavy her heart grew under them.

But desperation will lend a courage of its own; so, one morning, when it came about that there was nothing in the collapsed purse except two tiny strips of advertisements, she went out convinced that she must secure one of these places or—What the blank meant she shivered to contemplate.

One lady was in want of a companion, another of a nursery governess.

The first address proved to be a rather dingy house in a rather dingy locality. Allie took heart from that. Imposing surroundings did not promise so well for the shabby appearance she was obliged to present. The interior was dingy as the rest, and the lady into whose presence she was

ushered had a faded-out appearance rather strikingly at variance with the vivid tints of the cashmere morning-robe enveloping her gaunt, angular form. She surveyed the shrinking applicant through a formidable eye-glass with one prolonged stare and which took her in from head to foot, and then began that terrible ordeal of catenism. What were her accomplishments? Could she play and sing, read, embroider, do laces, and the like? All except the laces; Allie had never "done" laces, but she suggested timidly that she might learn.

Humph! Could she fit dresses, and do plain sewing, and hairdressing? Just a suspicion of spirit was aroused at the tone of that question, and Allie answered she had not supposed the duties of mantua-maker and lady's-maid combined with that of companion, but still she was willing to do her best in assuming such responsibilities.

Humph, again! Was she always cheerful, and could she be very amusing whenever called upon, and what references had she? The would-be companion sat silently aghast. The little pale face was sorrowful enough now to never have known a ray of either cheerfulness or amusement. She made known the fact at last that she had no references—she was quite a stranger here, and entirely friendless.

Unfortunate—ah! What might her name be by the way? Allie Verne—umph! A very unsuitable name. Verne—quite aristocratic in sound. There were Verne on the Avenue who would be quite indignant to know the cognomen was worn by a person in such circumstances. She really could not think of employing her on that account had there been no other objection; it seemed quite too much like an attempt to usurp a degree of respectability to which she was not entitled. Moreover, she did not seem capable to perform the duties required, and besides, the lady had just engaged a companion that very morning!

Another stare through the eye-glass at the person who was neither cheerful nor amusing, who was without references and guilty of possessing an aristocratic name—who, with all these things weighing against her, had presumed to apply for the situation—and the interview was ended.

Allie went out with swelling heart and tear-blinded eyes. How could any one be so deliberately cruel? Why had the lady subjected her to such an examination, which her former decision rendered so unnecessary?

She choked back the sobs and tears which rose, and a little later stood at the top of a broad flight of white marble steps, ringing the bell of a mansion which was like a palace compared with that dingy house in its dingy neighborhood. The warmth and brightness within were like going into Paradise from the chilling blasts of the street. And the cheery little woman in trailing ruby silk, who was pulling out her crimps before a mirror, who turned to give her a familiar nod and push a chair close to the register, was like an angelic vision after that other one—cold of heart and face.

Yes, the situation of nursery governess was still open; but Miss Alison—Allie had hesitated and given her first name only after the rebuff she had received from the other—Miss Alison scarcely looked strong; did she feel capable of taking such a charge? There were two children, healthy and boisterous—Mrs. Wycliffe threw open the door of the nursery adjoining. Did she think she could manage such mischievous little monkeys? Ah, Hart!—Miss Alison, her brother-in-law, Mr. Wycliffe.

Mr. Wycliffe, a tall and grave-looking man of thirty or more, acknowledged the introduction without putting a young scion of the house, who was his namesake, down from his knee, and kept his place while the arrangements which engaged Allie were concluded.

It seemed like life in dreamland, so light were her duties, so many pleasures wove themselves into her days. The thin face grew round and tinted with color again; the eyes regained the bright, happy gleam of old. Much of the change was due to the kindness of Mrs. Wycliffe, and much to the consideration of the uncle, Hart, who was such a favorite with her little charges.

Allie was very grateful for it, all never suspecting how her dainty presence had brought a fluttering visitant to the heart of that grave, silent man, whose attentions were so constant and unobtrusive as to be almost unrecognizable as such—an intangible, bright-winged, soft-eyed messenger, whose name was Love.

Mrs. Wycliffe was wiser. She saw the newly-awakened interest of the brother, whose disappointed life—disappointed by a first and faithless love—had been a little dark cloud reflected on her own dazzling fair horizon. Not every one would care to have a wealthy, eligible brother-in-law, fall in love with one's nursery governess, but Mrs. Wycliffe was a careless little body, uncluttered enough in the world's ways to consider happiness the most desirable element existence can hold.

It was she, at last, who brought Allie to a knowledge of the loving, noble heart which was longing for her—who told the whole story of the once desolated life which could be redeemed to happiness through her.

"Hart loves you, Allie," said Mrs. Wycliffe. "Such a faint-hearted knight as he is—running away from the hope which he calls presumption to indulge. He is a dear, noble fellow, and any woman might be proud and happy as his wife. He is gone for a day or two, but he has sent this to you, and if you wear it until he returns he will plead his own cause. I couldn't excuse such cowardice but for that sad experience of his which tends to make him distrustful."

It was a ring, a great cluster diamond, flashing and sparkling with a thousand lights, which she dropped into Allie's hand.

"And I never dreamed of this—I never once dreamed of it. And he has been so kind. Oh, Mrs. Wycliffe! what shall I do?"

"Just as your own heart prompts, my dear. There are plenty would consider themselves fortunate in being made Hart's choice, and I shall be glad to have you for a sister, Allie."

There was the slightest aggrieved touch in her tone that the fair girl, unfit to be dependent upon her own exertions, should hesitate over the grand chance.

But, Allie's heart was rebellious. It would seem ungrateful for her to refuse; he was noble and good; he had honored her so greatly by his preference; but, how could she marry any man while Guy Seymour's image was shrouded in the depths of her heart which had never forgotten him? He had

been faithless—he was never worthy of the love she cherished for him still, and knowing that, she had not even tried to crush the blind worship which could overlook all. Yet she was a weak little thing, clinging and dependent in her nature, loving care and tenderness, loving the luxuries of life, longing for strength to lean upon.

She passed a wearily sleepless night, and yet could not decide which was the right course she should pursue.

The morning's letters came in with the breakfast. Allie was waiting upon little Hart, for this family were knit in constant association and formal rules set at defiance; the little ones were a part of it, not elements peculiar to the nursery alone.

"My own brother is coming to-day," announced Mrs. Wycliffe over one of her missives. "The dear boy! It is months since I've seen him. How I hope he has got over his disappoinment. What an unfortunate mortal I am to have the lives of those who are dearest to me blasted by unhappy loves! Who knows but Hart's example may prove happily contagious?"

This, with a laughing glance toward Allie, under which the latter paled and trembled. What a cruel position it was; why couldn't they let her alone, to be happy in her own way?

She was undecided yet, when evening came, dressed and awaiting the summons which would come for her to go down. The ring lay there in her sight, a glittering temptation which seemed at the same time a warning. She touched it with her timid hand and turned it about under the light. Oh, if she could only know what was right!

There was a step on the stairs, and then the announcement that Miss Alison was wanted to play in the parlors. It was the last moment of grace; there was no longer time for wavering. In an instant more the ring flashed its thousand lights back from her slender finger, and she went down with her face ghastly in its unrelieved pallor.

She glided in and took her seat, not once glancing up. The notes trembled under the touch; she felt that she was there, seeing his pledge upon her hand; black notes floated in a sea of golden light before her eyes; she seemed whirled away in a giddy maze which her own mad music tinted. Then she was brought back by Mrs. Wycliffe's hand touching her shoulder.

"Allie, my dear! My brother, Mr. Seymour, Miss Alison. Why, Guy?"

No wonder she exclaimed. Mr. Seymour brushed past her and had the fluttering hands in his.

"Allie, my own Allie! Found at last!"

He had never been faithless after all. He told her all in a breath, with that others not recovered from their astonishment looking on, how he had not heard of her aunt's death for weeks after it had occurred, and then she was gone; how he had never given up looking for her, and what a joyful surprise this was to him.

"And oh! you foolish little thing," chimed in Mrs. Wycliffe. "How were you to know you and Guy's Allie were one? If you had only told me you were Allie Verne all this waiting need not have been. But, poor Hart! he is to be disappointed again."

Poor Hart! The glittering cluster ring came off from Allie's finger, and looking up she saw his face—changed, pale, reproachful, framed in the door beyond. It was gone in a moment. He would not cloud their joy by the reminder of his grief, but his life is blank of wifely love to this day.

A Strange Girl:
A NEW ENGLAND LOVE STORY.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND KIT," "RED MAGNET," "ACE OF SPADES," "HEART OF FIRE," "ACE OF HEARTS," "NEW YORK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

WIDOW GARDNER.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon. Elmira Gardner, more commonly called widow Gardner, the mother of the grocery clerk, Jerry, and the woman with whom Lydia Grame boarded, had made all needful preparations for supper, and had sat down in the rocking-chair in the parlor to enjoy a few minutes' rest.

The widow was a brisk, plump little woman, wearing her age remarkably well; as busy as a bee, and as neat as wax. Bideford folks said that there wasn't a better housekeeper in the State of Maine than Elmira Gardner.

The widow had opened the blinds, which had been carefully closed to keep out the sun, and, with an expression of placid contentment upon her face, was enjoying the cool breeze which swept over the town.

Suddenly her eyes caught sight of a young lady tripping up the street.

"Who's that?" she exclaimed, "if there ain't Delia Embden!"

And great was the widow's astonishment when the girl came directly to the house and opened the garden-gate, evidently intending to make a call.

"How do you do, Miss Gardner?" Delia said; "I've come to make a call."

"Come right in, Delia!" exclaimed the widow, hastening to throw open the front door.

She escorted the girl into the parlor, and pressed her to lay aside her things, which Delia preferred not to do, saying that she was only going to stop a few minutes.

"I s'pose," Mrs. Gardner, "that you had about come to the conclusion that I had forgotten all my old friends," the girl said.

"Well, to tell the truth, you hadn't been to see me for a long time, but I s'posed that you were busy. It's a good deal of work to take care of a big house like yours up on the hill, and I don't s'pose that you have any more time than you know what to do with," the widow replied.

The widow had been just a little bit put out because Delia had not called upon her lately. In the old time the Gardners and the Embdens had been very intimate, but, since the skipper of the Nancy Jane had become wealthy, a sort of a coldness had grown up between the two families. Three or four years before, the village gossips had broadly hinted that it was likely that Jerry Gardner and Delia Embden would make a match, but, when Daddy Embden made such a display of wealth, all imagined that Jerry, who was only a clerk in a grocery store, stood very little chance of winning the wealthy heiress.

"Yes, the care of the house does keep me pretty busy; and then father, too, hasn't been well for nearly four months now."

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed the widow, in astonishment. "Why, I never heard any one say any thing about your father being sick."

"Well, he's not so sick as to need a doctor, but still he needs a good deal of looking after," Delia explained.

"You're looking real well, Delia."

"Oh, yes, I'm always well."

"Well, now, you're a good deal like me. I do declare I haven't been sick for I don't know when. And I work pretty smart, too. I s'pose you know that I've got a boarder, and that always makes more work."

"Yes, a Miss Grame, I believe; Mary Ann was telling me something about her the other day," Delia said, with an air of indifference.

"Well, I want to know if Mary Ann is still with you?" the widow exclaimed.

"Yes."

"She's a real smart girl. Her mother and I, and your mother, too, we all went to school together. Yes, Miss Grame boards with me; real nice girl; she works in the mill across the river, in Saco. I kinder have an idea, Delia, that maybe she won't board with me a great while longer," and the widow looked mysterious.

"I s'pose you mean, Mrs. Gardner, that it's likely she'll go to keeping house for herself?" Delia half-queried, smiling.

"Well, now, I guess that you have heard something about it," the widow said, shrewdly.

"Yes, Mary Ann told me, but I could hardly believe it."

"Well, now, I shouldn't either," said the widow, drawing her chair a little nearer to that of her visitor, and lowering her voice, "but that the deacon, his father, called on her yesterday."

The girl looked astonished, and there was just a little shade of disappointment on her face.

"Why, that was strange," she said, slowly.

"Yes, I didn't know a thing about it till after the deacon and gone away; then Liddy told me—that's her name, you know, Lydia Grame."

"Yes."

"Well, I vow, I believe you could have knocked me down with a feather when I heard of it, I was so astonished. Just like the deacon, though; he alters was one of the best-hearted men that ever did live."

"And did he come on purpose to see Miss Grame?"

"Yes, Liddy was sitting at the window, and he walked right in and introduced himself. Of course, when I heard that the deacon had been here, I was worried almost to death because I didn't see him. You see, my dear, the deacon and I used to be the best of friends. I've danced many a time with him in the old town hall over in Saco. That was years ago, when we were both young folks. Liddy told me all about what the deacon said."

"Well, is he willing that Sinclair should marry Miss Grame?" and the young girl looked just a little bit anxious as she asked the question.

"Well, I guess so," the widow replied, confidently. "Of course he didn't say right out, either one way or the other."

"But, what was the reason that he called upon her? I don't understand that."

"Well, now, that's the strangest part of the whole affair. You see, the deacon got a letter without any name signed to it, telling him that Sinclair was going to marry Miss Grame, and so the deacon he up and come right over to see what the girl was like. It was real mean, whoever did it. I don't see why folks want to meddle with other people's business, do you?"

"No," Delia rejoined, quite slowly, but the widow, deeply interested in her story, never noticed this hesitation.

"I s'pose whoever wrote the letter thought that the deacon would get mad and forbid Sinclair's coming here; but, they never made a bigger mistake in all their lives. You see, it acted just the other way. The deacon came over to see Liddy, 'cos he's a real live Yankee and got nat'ral curiosity. But he talked real good, and when he found out that Liddy didn't have any friends or relatives, he up and told her that if she wanted assistance or advice she must come right to him. Now, Delia, folks can say what they like, but the deacon has got the real salt of the earth in his nature."

"Then I suppose that Sinclair will marry this Miss Grame pretty soon?" Delia said, thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't know; there's no telling, my dear," the widow said, with a shake of the head. "Liddy declares that there isn't any engagement between her and Sinclair, but, as I tell her, there's no knowing what will happen. The young man thinks a good deal of her, and she does of him, though she won't own it. But, before long, I guess, she'll find out that she likes him. Young folks are very contrary with their lovers sometimes. I remember I used to just plague the life out of Gardner afore we were married. I don't believe that I would have ever consented to marry him, although I did like him better than any of the rest of the fellows, but we were on a picnic one day down to the Pool, and he got me to go out sailing, and when he popped the question for about the four hundredth time, and I commenced to laugh at him as usual, he grabbed me right by the arms, and says he, 'If you don't say yes, Elmira, I s'pose I'll souse you right into the water,' and I had on my best silk dress. I kinder screamed and hollered a bit, and said, 'Oh, Joshi, don't!' and then I said 'yes' afore I knew it, and, Delia, I got just one of the best men that ever lived!"

Delia laughed at the widow's story.

"And you never regretted it?"

"Never," said the widow, emphatically; "he was a good provider, and when he died, it just took away half my life. I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for Jerry. He's just like his father, full of mischief, but just as good as they make men nowadays."

"How is Jerry?"

"Oh, he's well, thank you. He's down to the grocery store, just where he used to be, clerking it. Get's forty dollars a month now, and he has full charge of the store. I s'pose he'll be a partner there 'fore long. Jerry's very saving; he's got close onto a thousand dollars in the bank."

"I must go now," Delia said, rising.

"Won't you stop to tea?"

"Oh, I can't; father will expect me home."

The widow accompanied Delia to the front door.

"Looks like a thunder storm," she said, glancing up at the clouded sky.

"I guess I can get home before it comes," the girl said.

"I say, Delia, when are you going to get married? 'Bout time for you," the widow said, suddenly.

"I'll have to wait till somebody asks me," the girl said, laughing.

"Sakes alive! I guess there's fellows enough that would be glad to do that. I did hope, once on a time, that you and Jerry might make a match," the widow said, shrewdly.

A little tinge of color came into Delia's pale face.

"Why, how you talk, Mrs. Gardner!" she exclaimed. "Jerry never cared any thing for me, I am sure!"

"Well, if your father hadn't got so awful rich, I rather guess Jerry would 'a' said something, but the money frightened him away."

"I guess it was me more than the money," Delia said, with lightened color.

"Well, good-by."

CHAPTER XX.

A SOFT CONFESSION.

The girl hurried down the path, and, as she opened the gate, took a good look up at the sky.

The clouds were very black indeed, and every now and then the dark cloud-banks opened and the forked lightning came forth.

Delia hesitated for a moment.

"You had better wait a little bit," the widow called out from the door; "Jerry will be up from the store, soon, with an umbrella. I'd offer you one, but there ain't an umbrella in the house."

"I guess I can get home before the storm breaks," and then Delia hurried off, the widow's shrill "Good-by, come again!" ringing in her ears.

She walked up the street as fast as she could, but the heavens grew darker and darker each minute, and by the time she reached the corner the rain came pouring down in big drops.

Delia halted under a large tree which stood at the corner of the street.

"This will save me from getting wet," she murmured, as she took refuge under the spreading branches.

And how it did rain! Down it came in great torrents.

Delia had been standing under the tree nearly a quarter of an hour before the storm manifested the slightest intention of abating its force in the least, and then, though the drops were not so large as before, still the rain came down steadily.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the girl, in dismay; "I wonder how long it's going to rain like this? Will I ever be able to get home?"

Then a man came up the street, struggling with an umbrella, for the wind was quite high, and he took refuge under the tree.

He shut up the umbrella, and the two recognized each other.

"Oh, Jerry!" cried the girl, in evident delight at the meeting.

"Why, Miss Embden, how do you do?" exclaimed Jerry, for the man with the umbrella was the grocery clerk.

"Miss Embden!" and Delia made a wry face at him; you're getting very polite, all of a sudden."

"Yes," said Jerry, rather confused.

"I should think that between such old friends as you and I quite so much ceremony wasn't needed."

"Well, we ain't been quite such good friends lately as we used to be," he said, honestly.

"Whose fault is it? Not mine, I'm sure!" Delia exclaimed, decidedly.

"I guess that it ain't mine," he said. "Fact is, Miss—mean Delie—there's quite a little difference between you now and what you used to be."

"I wasn't aware that I'd changed a great deal."

"Well, I don't say that you have changed, but then circumstances have changed," he explained.

"That is, you mean that you've found some other young lady whom you like a great deal better than you do me," Delia said, just a little snappishly.

Jerry looked at her for a moment in astonishment.

"You go to thunder now!" he exclaimed, defiantly. "I s'pose, if you say that ag'in, I'll push you right out in the rain!"

The girl did not seem to be a great deal alarmed at the threat.

"At that's the way you always treated me; you never were happy unless you were abusing me," and Delia's eyes sparkled, and a sly look came over her face.

"Delie, I never abused you at all, and you know it," he said, in defense; "you used to treat me like sin, though."

"How long is it going to rain?" she asked, suddenly.

"Bout an hour or so, I guess."

"How am I going to get home?"

"Well, I'll see you home if you'll permit me," he said. "I guess the umbrella is big enough for two. We can go just as soon as it holds up a little."

"I'm sure, I'm very much obliged," she said; "I think that it's quite fortunate, this storm and meeting you here, for I don't believe that you would have ever come to the house. You have never been to see me, Jerry, since I've lived up on the hill."

"Well, Delie, I'll spit it right out; I didn't know as I would be welcome," Jerry spoke honestly and bluntly.

The girl flushed up at once.

"Jeremiah, have I ever treated you in such a manner that you should have cause to think in that way?" she said, quite spitefully.

"Well, no; I can't say as you have," he replied, thoughtfully. "But then, you see, as I said afore, circumstances have changed. Your daddy got to be one of the richest men in town, and I ain't any thing but a clerk. It was all right when you were only plain Delie Embden, old Skipper Embden's daughter, taking in sewing and dressmaking for a living; but now that you've got to be Miss Embden, with a big house on the hill and a pair of long-tailed horses, I kinder concluded, you see, that it was 'bout time for me to haul in my horns."

"Well, I never did own that I cared any thing for you, but I like you just as well now as I ever did," Delia responded, shyly.

"Oh, git out! That won't do, Delie! What would Sinclair Paxton say if he heard that?" Jerry asked, with a grimace upon his face.

The girl colored up red as fire and the sharp blue eyes snapped.

"Sinclair Paxton is nothing to me!" she exclaimed.

"Glad to hear you say so, 'cos I know that he's paying attention to another gal. But, Delie, he comes to your house pretty often, and I heard your father say once that he thought you might find a worse husband than Sinclair Paxton. I kinder thought he meant that as a hint for me, and I'm like a well brought-up dog, Delie; I always go down-stairs when I see 'em getting ready to kick me out."

"When did my father say that? How long ago?" she asked.

"Oh, a long time ago; just after he came back and commenced to build the house up on the hill."

"Well, father did want me to marry Sinclair," she said, slowly.

"I s'pose you was willing?"

"Well, yes," and Delie's face got red again. "Now, Jerry, I ain't going to tell you a bit of a story. I don't deserve that you should care a mite for me. I've been a real cruel, heartless girl, but I'm sorry for it; but, Jerry, my head was turned, and father kept telling me how much it would please him if I would marry Sinclair, and I know I've got my faults—"

"Chock full of 'em!" Jerry observed, mischievously.

"No, I ain't!" she cried, quickly; "you know better than that. But I've wanted to see you. I've been acting real mean lately, Jerry, and I've only just found it out."

"I found it out a long time ago," cruel Jerry continued, and he quietly put his arm around the slender waist of the blushing damsel and drew her close up to his side.

"Oh, don't, Jerry! If the folks should see you, what would they think?" she said, in remonstrance.

"Folks be darned!" he exclaimed, defiantly; "there ain't anybody round; it's almost pitch dark, too. But, Delie, you've made me feel so good that I must hug you a little or bust!"

"But, Jerry, do you really care for me after all my meanness?" she asked, looking up in his face.

"Well, I guess I do. We ain't any of us angels, Delie," and he bent down his head to her. She understood what he wanted.

"Don't, Jerry! You'll crumple my collar all up. Oh, dear!" she remonstrated.

"I s'pose I must have a kiss, Delie, just so as to make me believe that this is all real!"

"There," she said, as she held up her lips to him, and put her arms around his neck.

A good, hearty smack Jerry imparted on the red lips of the girl.

"Now, I hope you're satisfied, you great bear!" she said, releasing herself from his embrace. "You've rumped my collar all up and pushed my hat half off, and—oh!"

"What's the matter?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Some drops of rain have dripped from the tree and run all down my back," she replied, shivering.

"Never mind; you'll be home soon; the rain is holding up."

"Let us go, then."

So under the shelter of the umbrella they both started.

"You can stop to tea with me, Jerry?" she asked, as they walked on through the rain.

"Yes, I s'pose I could, but what will your father say?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Oh, he'll be glad to see you!" she replied, quickly. "Father has changed a great deal lately. He hasn't been well for a long, long time. Do you know, Jerry, I wish sometimes that he hadn't made so much money. I think that he would have been a great deal happier."

"Maybe so; riches don't always bring happiness; at the same time I'd just as lief that somebody would throw a ton or two of gold or greenbacks at me. I'd do my best to 'wrestle' with it."

"Ain't you satisfied with the fortune that you've got already?" she asked.

"Hain't got much, Delie—that is, not much when reckoned ag'in' what your daddy's got."

"Going to have me, ain't you?"

"Well, I don't know; am I?" he said, dubiously.

"Do you s'pose I should have let you kiss me if you wasn't?"

"Well, I s'pose not; but then, you know, you women folks are so mighty onartin'."

Jerry stopped to tea and spent the evening at Daddy Embden's.

CHAPTER XXI.

SINCLAIR'S QUESTION.

THE sun was sinking slowly in the west that warm Sabbath afternoon. It had been intensely hot all day and the good people of Biddeford and Saco had suffered accordingly.

The widow Gardner and Lydia were sitting in the parlor, looking out upon the little garden, when Sinclair Paxton came up the street.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Gardner! Good-evening, Miss Graine," he said, as he halted before the house and leaned carelessly on the fence.

"Good-evening, Mr. Paxton," the widow replied, while Lydia contented herself with simply bowing.

"Ain't it hot?" the widow continued, fanning herself vigorously.

"It has been very warm, indeed," he said. "Are you going to church to-night, Mrs. Gardner?"

"No, I'm going to stay to home to-night. I thought that I should really melt this morning. Are you going this evening, Liddy?"

"No, it is too warm."

"How would you like to take a little walk before dark, Miss Graine?" he asked. "I think that we could possibly find a breeze on the hills by the stone quarry."

"Yes, go, Liddy!" cried the widow, without giving the girl time to reply. "It will do you good; you have been out of sorts all day. I'll get your hat." And Mrs. Gardner hastened away.

If she had been left to herself the girl would have refused to go, but she did not wish to provoke comment; so when the widow returned with her hat, she quietly put it on, left the house, and took Sinclair's proffered arm.

The two walked down the street together, while the widow watched them with admiring eyes.

"Sakes alive! what a nice couple they will make!" she exclaimed.

Sinclair and Lydia walked slowly on.

"Have you been ill to-day?" he asked.

"Oh, no, not ill, and yet not feeling very well."

"The walk will probably do you good, then."

"Perhaps so, and yet, if it had not been that my refusing to come would have made Mrs. Gardner wonder, I should not have accepted your escort."

"Indeed!" and Sinclair looked astonished; "pray, may I ask the reason?"

"Do you want me to tell you frankly?"

"I hope that you will never speak in any other way with me," he said, quite gravely.

"You know that your father has been to see me?" she asked, suddenly.

"Yes."

"And you know the reason why he came to see me?"

"I do."

"Every one in Biddeford couples our names together, and they have no right to do so," Lydia was strangely agitated. It was plain that she was nervously herself to play, difficult part.

"And you blame me for this?" he asked.

Lydia hesitated for a moment, looked into the grave face of her companion, then slowly made reply:

"If you did not come to see me people would not be able to make remarks about the matter."

"Is it your wish, then, that I shall not come to see you?" Paxton's voice and manner were calm and grave; not the slightest trace of excitement.

"What if I say that it is?" the girl asked slowly, and with evident hesitation.

"If you do not wish me to call upon you—if you wish our friendship to stop—it is only necessary for you to say so, and I shall most assuredly endeavor to comply with your wishes."

Lydia seemed perplexed. She walked on for a few minutes in silence; then she suddenly spoke, stealing a sly glance at Sinclair's face as she did so.

"The people speak of us as if we were engaged lovers."

"Yes, I know that; and now will you permit me to ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Have I ever acted in such a manner as to lead any one to suppose that we were engaged?"

"No, I suppose not," the girl responded, slowly; "only that your visits lead folks to think so."

"The remedy for that is simple enough; I won't come to see you any more."

Again Lydia was silent for quite a long time.

"You know I have told you very often that I did not care for you in the way which you seem to want me to care for you," she at length remarked.

"Yes, I know that."

"I suppose that is the reason why you are willing to discontinue your visits?"

"Not at all, for I have a most decided belief that you do care for me, and in precisely the way that I want you to," Sinclair spoke confidently.

Lydia looked in his face in utter astonishment.

"Why, what makes you say that?" she asked.

"Because I believe it."

"But it is not true."

"Are you sure of it?" the young man's manner was exceedingly confident. "Suppose I prove to you that it is true?"

"You can't do so!" the girl exclaimed, quickly, and yet there was a lack of confidence in her tone.

"You have told me twenty times at least that you do not love me—that you only respect me as a friend."

"Yes, and that is the truth," but the girl uttered the speech as though she fully expected him to prove that it was not.

"You mean that you believe it to be true?"

"Why, I am sure I ought to know whether it is true or not." Lydia was just a little bewildered at the manner of her lover.

"Twenty times you have told me, 'I do not love you,' and twenty times the moment after your actions have convinced me you do love me, or, at least, care a little for me."

"Mr. Paxton—"

"Don't interrupt me now, Lydia, please; wait until I am through," he said, firmly.

"I do not doubt that, in your heart, you think of me only as a friend, and never in the light of a possible husband. Now, I am going to convince you that you have really mistaken your feelings, and that you do love me, not a great deal, perhaps, but still you do love me a little, and the chances are that, one of these days, you will care for me with all the passion your heart is capable of feeling."

"I do not think you can prove this by my actions," she replied, doubtfully.

"I am going to try," he responded. "But if I succeed the victory will be a costly one to me, for in the future you will be on your guard, and that will deprive me of a great deal of pleasure which I now enjoy. I think I fully understand you, Lydia; it is your will, not your heart, which forbids love. Now then to begin: you have other gentlemen friends besides myself, of course; Jerry Gardner, for one."

"Yes."

"How many times has Jerry kissed you?"

"Oh, Sinclair!" the tone of pain told fully how deeply the girl was hurt by the question.

"You don't answer; won't you reply, please?" he said, gently but with firmness.

"Why do you ask such a question?" the girl said, and tears sparkled in her dark eyes.

"I must ask it; why don't you reply? It's simple enough. How many times has Jerry Gardner kissed you?"

"Never, in all his life!" exclaimed the girl, quickly.

"There now, that's the answer," and a quiet smile appeared on his face. "How many times has any other Biddeford or Saco gentleman kissed you?"

"Why do you ask such questions?" Lydia exclaimed, petulantly. "No one has ever kissed me since I have been here."

"Except Sinclair Paxton," he said, a volume of meaning in the simple words.

A moment Lydia looked him in the face, and then her gaze sunk to the ground, and a burning blush swept over her pale cheeks and forehead.

"You have freely yielded to me your forehead, your eyes, and your cheeks, reserving only your lips, and yet you coldly tell me, 'I do not love you—you are only a friend,' and expect me to believe it."

"Oh, Sinclair, you are so cruel!" the girl murmured, still blushing deeply.

"No, no, Lydia, not cruel; I am only just," he answered. "You have compelled me to this. You have really, to a certain extent, led me on. It was in your power to have stopped this affair right at the beginning. You have received my attentions, conscious that they tended only to one end,

marriage, and now you say, stop. But, Lydia, you do not mean what you say, or else you have acted with me in a way that a girl should not act with a man unless she intends to marry him."

"Perhaps I have been foolish," she murmured, lowly.

"Not if you love me, which I think you do; that would excuse all. But if you still persist in saying that you do not care for me, what construction can I put upon your actions?"

"Oh, Sinclair, I am in such a terrible position!" she murmured.

"A terrible position!" he said, in wonder; "I do not understand how that can be."

"Oh, if I could only speak!" she cried, distractedly.

"And why not? Surely you can trust me. Speak freely. Believe me, I will keep your secret."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 140.)

Delivered from Evil.

BY CORALYN MORE.

IT was at Mrs. Midas' ball that Netta Fay's romance came to her. All through her lovely girlhood she had dreamed of an ideal, but never until that night had seen the face she could fancy more than any other.

"Netta, allow me to present to you Mr. Hale. Roland, my friend, Miss Fay."

Mrs. Midas was gone, and Netta stood spellbound beneath the gaze of two dark eyes, whose magnetism she was unable to resist.

"Strauss is no doubt your favorite, as he is mine. I forget the stern realities of life, when keeping time to his music. Will you favor me with one waltz, Miss Fay?"

Netta mechanically placed her hand upon his arm, and they floated together down the long rooms, to the dreamy rhythm of the *Weiner Bonbons*. Both forgot the ball, the dancers, every thing but each other.

Roland Hale's eyes rarely left Netta's lovely face, and during a pause in the music he drew her into the conservatory.

"I see, Miss Fay, that you are as enthusiastic as myself when waltzing. One can not be in heaven forever, and we must return to the prosa of life. Your aunt was looking daggers at you, and disapproval at me just now. You must know, Miss Netta, that I am a sad scapegrace, and regarded by match-making mamma as a black sheep in the fold of marriageable young men, whom they intend to fleece after pulling the wool over their victim's eyes."

In spite of Netta's aunt, however, he covered her shoulders with her cloak, followed her to the carriage, and gave her gloved hand an expressive squeeze as he bade her good-night.

While Mrs. Ross was speaking to the coachman, he whispered in Netta's ear:

"The dragon may watch, but she can not keep us apart long. I have known you but a few hours, but I have lived a lifetime of happiness already. You can not avoid Fate, Netta."

Netta's face was very red, and she muttered something about "unwarrantable insolence," but she could not avoid admiring the saucy fellow for all that, and, strive as she would against it, she could not throw off the spell he had so soon about her.

"Netta," exclaimed Mrs. Ross, at length, in no very sweet voice, "are not you ashamed of yourself, flirting so shamefully with that Roland Hale? We all know what a worthless scamp he is, with not a penny to call his own, and fast at that. Why, child, your name was in everybody's mouth to-night."

"How many do you include in that comprehensive term, 'everybody,' auntie?" inquired Netta, with provoking nonchalance.

"That horrid old Greenlow and his maiden sister generally represent the voice of society to you, I believe."

"Mr. Greenlow certainly did speak of it, Netta, and wished me to ask you to discontinue round dances for his sake. Of course you will do so now, my dear, and after you are married you can do as you please."

Netta's lips curled disdainfully, but she leaned back in the carriage, vouchsafing no reply.

Mrs. Ross had already formed an engagement between Mr. Greenlow, an elderly, baldheaded millionaire, and her niece, Netta, the beauty and belle of the circle in which they moved. Netta had acquiesced quietly enough, as Mr. Greenlow, though by no means her ideal, was good-hearted, generous, and fabulously wealthy.

But now it was all changed, she declared passionately to herself. Henceforth, Roland Hale would stand between her and the man she was bound to love and honor as her future husband.

In spite of Mrs. Ross' frigid insolence, Roland Hale called many times upon Netta during the ensuing winter. At balls, *soirees*, and parties he haunted her, teased her, and Netta, forgetting all but the love fast gaining control over her heart, recklessly gave herself up to the enjoyment of the hour, and waltzed, drove and flirted with Mr. Hale, while her aunt scolded unceasingly, and Mr. Greenlow looked on in jealous dismay.

Netta had just been waltzing to the voluptuous music of Strauss, and had dismissed her partner for an ice, when her *fiance* joined her.

"Netta," he exclaimed, his round face very warm and red, "do you know, my dear, that I must remonstrate with you upon your conduct? It is, to say the least, very singular to see an engaged lady behave as you have for the past few months. For my sake this thing must be stopped."

Netta's face flushed at his peremptory tone.

"To what do you refer, Mr. Greenlow? I am doubtless obtuse, but I fail to comprehend your meaning."

"It is a lie!" exclaimed that gentleman, irritated by her coolness. "You know that I refer to your intimacy with Roland Hale. He is a scamp and rascal, and I command my future wife to drop him now and forever."

Netta arose, and held a handsome solitaire, the token of her betrothal, toward him.

"And I, Mr. Greenlow, thought that I had engaged myself to a *gentleman*. I have discovered my mistake to-night, and, thank God! there is yet time to rectify it."

He threw the ring from him and hissed in her ear:

"You will regret this bitterly. Become the beggarly wife of a drunkard, if you like, but in after-life you will repent your folly in bitterness and shame."

Netta stood as one dazed after he had

left, and sunk into a cushioned seat within the curtained window.

A kiss fell upon her brow and Roland Hale stood above her, with more tenderness and feeling in his eyes than she had ever seen there before.

"Netta, dear one, you have decided wisely. What is his money compared to the love I feel for you? Will you wear this simple gold ring in place of the jewel you have lost?"

For one moment reason asserted itself in Netta's brain, and silenced the hungry cry of her heart.

"What," asked Reason, "did she know of the life of the man before her?" All she had heard was derogatory to him. Could she, then, trust herself to him for all the future until death should part them?

He read hesitation in her eyes, but before she could speak he held her in his arms and kissed her again and again.

"You dare not refuse, Netta! You dare not wreck my life after making me love you. You are mine, before heaven, and nothing on earth can ever part us."

There was command in his voice, and although she struggled for a brief moment against her love, it conquered at last, and unresistingly she submitted to his kisses.

Netta Hale made a charming picture in her snowy morning robes as she sat looking out of her window, one autumn morning, at her husband's retreating form.

"Dear Roland," she murmured tenderly, "how cruel I was to doubt you for one instant before my marriage. God has blessed me too entirely with your love. My happiness is almost too great for earth."

Happy tears stood in her eyes, and her gaze rested upon the beautiful room she occupied. Articles of taste and art were scattered about the apartment, and wealth was everywhere apparent.

Fortune had certainly favored the pair, for after his wedding Roland Hale had unexpectedly fallen heir to immense wealth.

His old life he never referred to, but devoted himself to his idolized wife and seemed content to spend his days in idleness and his evenings by Netta's side.

But there came a change, and Netta was not sorry when she saw her husband enter the arena of political life and listened to the music of his loved voice as he led multitudes by the fiery eloquence of his speech.

Honors were heaped upon the popular speaker by his party, and Roland Hale awoke from his lethargy to find himself famous.

Netta's pride in her husband was not misplaced. Day by day she watched him with loving eyes as he labored for his country, and upon this particular morning she sat looking after her husband's retreating figure with some anxiety.

It was a decisive day for our country, and Roland, eager and hopeful, had started out to learn the results of the election so soon as they should be known.

"I am going to a political dinner, love," he had said, tenderly, upon parting; "and so my pet won't see me until nine o'clock. If you get sleepy, do not sit up for me, for though I intend to be prompt, something may detain me."

The day passed happily to Netta, and after dinner she lighted the gas in the cozy library, placed Roland's dressing-gown upon the back of his chair, and warmed his slippers before the glowing fire. Then, stepping to the windows, she drew down the shades and shut out the tempestuous November night.

Taking up a periodical she tried to interest herself in a spicy article, but it was of no avail. Eight o'clock struck—nine, and then Netta listened for coming footsteps. Hour after hour passed away, and filled with a vague alarm she started as midnight clanged from the heavy bells in the city.

What detained Roland? What if he never came back to her? Perhaps he had been foully murdered, and might even then be lying still and bloody in some dark street.

The thought caused her to spring from her seat and hurry to the front door. With trembling fingers she drew back the heavy chain, when a man's figure, wet and limp, fell against her. For one moment she staggered, then taking the form in her arms she sobbed over it like a child.

"Oh, Roland, darling, I thought I had lost you forever. Speak to me, love, and tell me all is well!"

She pressed her lips to his, but what caused her to retreat to the furthest corner of the hall and her lip to curl with disgust?

"Did you sit up for me, Netta? The meetin' was some, I tell you. Friends an' fellah-citizens, the present occasion is one of the most critical in the history of our country."

He raised his hand and waved it to an imaginary audience.

Advancing toward Netta he attempted to kiss her, but with a cry of pain she escaped him and ran up the stairs. He stumbled after her in a vague sort of way and staggered into their apartment.

"They gave me fire to drink. I am burning up, Netta, dearest, for Heaven's sake give me water."

He held out his trembling hands beseechingly toward her, but with scorn and loathing upon the beautiful face she watched her husband's unsteady, bloodshot eyes.

"Roland Hale, I, your wife, witness your disgrace. I have loved you blindly, but my love dies when respect is lost. I will leave you to your liquor, and may it console you for the loss of your wife." Then, with another glance at his heavy face, "My God, I never dreamed I had married a man lower than a beast!"

Her clear, ringing tones seemed to arouse him, and consciousness beamed for one instant in his dull eyes.

"Netta, I have sinned, but forgive me. Oh, stay with me, my wife, or I die!"

He fell upon his face on the bed, and with swift steps Netta left him. Conscience was at work and bade her return to her place near her husband, but unheeding she passed out the front door, walked down the deserted street and took refuge within the home of her aunt.

All the next morning she was restless to return, but the scorn in her aunt's face when she hinted at her wishes restrained her from carrying out her desire.

Noon came and Netta listened anxiously for every ring at the bell. Perhaps Roland would come and beg her to return; but she waited until lunch and still her husband did not seek her.

About one o'clock there was a sharp ring at the bell.

"Is Mrs. Hale here?" came in a strange voice to Netta's listening ear.

She stepped hastily into the passage and came face to face with Dr. Bent, their next door neighbor.

THE SEXTON'S DOGMATICS.

BY HIS NEXT BEST FRIEND, JOE JOY, JR.

I never didn't see much use
In keepin' a pup,
Their profligacy ain't much
When you come to figure up,
And all their uselessness won't pay
For what they eat and sup.

Bill Sinkins had the meanest dog
That ever you tresser saw,
He kept him in his butcher shop,
And there he'd lay and gnaw
Away all day at mutton-bones
And beefsteaks in the raw.

And when a feller went apast,
And didn't want to stop,
Out after him as quick as wink
Would jump this awful pup,
And either bite him bad or go
A-whopin' of him up.

And when that dog would give a man
A gentle little nip,
He'd hold him for a half an hour
And wouldn't let him slip—
So close he stuck to business,
So powerful was his grip.

One day a country dog went by
That was uncommon stout,
When Sinkins was quite busy in,
And wasn't looking out.
This pup of his went for him,
And raised a reg'lar bout.

Now these two dogs straightway began
Each other for to chew,
A-tryin' for to see, you see,
Which had the strongest jaw,
And bit each other's ears and nose
Contrary to the law.

Awile they'd have it nip and tuck,
And then they tuck a nip,
They caught each other by the nose
And tightened on the grip,
Till it was most preposterous,
For one to tell who'd whip.

This rumpus, small within itself,
To large dimensions grew,
And every bettin' man in town
To the scene of conflict flew.
With "A sawback on the black dog," and
"Two V's, 's up the blue!"

Now Sinkins hearing of the noise,
Came jumpin' from his shop
In his white apron, just in time
To see his loving pup
By the assistance of that dog,
In the neighborhood of "used up."

He put his foot into that fuss,
As men who own dogs do,
And give that upper dog a kick,
When up his master flew,
"My friend, your dog beginned this muss,
Now let 'em fight it through."

At that old Sinkins turned around
And snapt him on the jaw,
The stranger said, "Such things as this
I think I never saw.
And turned his hand into a fist,
And gave him one from law.

Just then old Sinkins found it was
Convenient to lay down;
The stranger then proceeded quick
To do him up quite brown,
Such pounding, chawing, gouging, there
Had not occurred in town.

Over they rolled among the dogs,
The scene was awful rich,
They got in such a mixed-up mix
You couldn't tell who from which;
The dogs and men both bit and gouged
And tumbled in the ditch.

The marshal hove that way at last
And stopped the awful strife;
He sent the men to jail—the dogs
He killed with club and knife,
And all the people sighed and said,
"Tis sad; but sich is life."

All for Gold.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

THE night of the Second of November, 189— will long be remembered by the inhabitants of a certain Southern seaboard city. For, during the dreadful storm that emptied its vials of wrath upon the beautiful metropolis, the basest of crimes was committed, and if the deed had vanished from the mind of any one, the retribution that followed recalled it with terrible distinctness.

Casper Severn was the miser of the Southern mart. For years he had toiled unwearyingly for the yellow dross that men call gold, and it was thought—for no one knew to a certainty—that he had accumulated a vast deal of temporal wealth. He was rarely seen upon the streets; but men, and women, too—splendidly-clad ladies—crossed the dingy threshold of his yet dingier shop that stood before the quaint building he called home; and when they came forth again, their faces would glow with a triumph which the scrutinizing observer could have fathomed.

The white-haired miser did not attempt to earn a living from the contents of his shop, for, although the shelves were laden with books, the place could not be styled a store. Those who crossed the threshold did not tarry to examine the dusty tomes, many of which would have delighted the heart of a bibliophile; but a few words with Casper would guide them to a room in the rear of the front structure.

There the old man gave them gold, and registered the account in a ponderous ledger, whose pages filled a great safe which he never permitted any of his customers to see. His true profession, then, was the unenviable one of a usurer, and his old heart was full of secrets which he sold at as high percentage as he did his gold.

Men hated him, men feared him, and no man loved him.

But he was beloved, as the reader shall learn ere he finishes the perusal of this story of crime.

On the night of storm written in the inauguration of our story, Old Casper, as he had long been called by all who knew him, closed his book-stall at an early hour, and made the doors and windows secure as usual with a multiplicity of iron bolts and bars, which defied the fabulous strength of a Hercules.

"I have loaned much to-day," he murmured, and his avaricious little eyes, buried deeply in his head, snapped with an unwonted fire. "And they who called will pay; yes, they must pay, or I will sell to the highest bidder secrets, to stifle which some of them would almost give their hearts."

"That Hilliard—the *soi-disant* New York banker—will come to me no more," he continued, after a long pause. "He would give me nothing but his word, and that may be a straw. I cursed him ere he left—the only man I have cursed for years, and he will come no more to me for a loan."

The old man paused rather abruptly, and listened with fearful countenance.

"Tis nigh but the storm," he said, reassuredly, as he threw open an iron door and crossed the threshold of his treasure-room. "I have heard the roar of the storm for seventy odd years, and why should I fear it now? 'Tis said that the love of gold clothes men's hearts with fear; but that is a lie—as base as the heart that coined it."

With a light clutched in his bony hand,

he moved forward and knelt before a gigantic safe, the front of which glittered with steel bolts. Again he listened and heard the noise of the storm, smiled at his childish fear, and threw wide the ponderous door!

The interior of the safe contained two shelves, which groined beneath the weight of great ledgers, wherein was written the usurer's accounts, and vague hints of dark secrets beneath many. He drew several pages in the light of the sickly dip, until he heard the tones of the city clock proclaim the hour of twelve.

Then he closed the king of the ledgers, and drew from beneath the lowest shelf two chests, literally covered with steel.

He chuckled avariciously as he threw back the lids, and feasted his old eyes upon the auriferous contents of the strong boxes. He drew a bag full of gold from one, and was reaching over the lid for the last, when a footstep on the stone floor startled him!

He turned with a cry that can ring from no lips save those of a miser, when the thief comes to his strong room to deprive him of his shining gods, and the candle revealed a sight that stilled his heart, and sent arrows of ice through his cord-like veins!

A step from the horror-stricken miser stood a man; and such a man! He was tall and strong of limb, and a black mask covered his face. His head was covered by a bandana, kerchief, and his garments, with the pistol conspicuously displayed in his belt, gave him a ferocious appearance. He did not move, but a terrible knife, drawn back for a fatal blow, and the body bent for a spring, boded ill for the man upon whom a pair of dark eyes glared from the mask.

"What brought you here?" demanded Casper Severn, in a tone that seemed to emanate from a charnel vault.

"Gold! What would bring a man to your abode but the yellow jacks?" replied

that thenceforward she would live for the fulfillment of her vow.

She had entered the treasure-room a moment before the fiend's appearance, to see what kept the miser from his couch. She saw him at his gold, and, not wishing to disturb him, paused in the gloom, behind the little safe. From thence she witnessed the base crime recorded above, and her keen eyes had marked the murderer, despite the subtle disguise he wore.

A year quickly flitted into the past, and the papers had long since ceased to talk about the midnight assassination of Casper Severn. Gabrielle had deserted the old house, and taken up her abode in the most aristocratic portion of the city, where she soon became the belle of fashionable society.

Her adopted father's wealth had fallen to her, and she found herself rich enough to endow several institutions of learning. She had peeped into the miser's ledgers, and consigned them to the flames; and the debts recorded on their pages should remain unpaid forever.

She had gold enough, and lovers, too, for that matter.

When the assassin's knife struck the miser, his protegee's hand was promised to a young lawyer named Marshall Whirley, and the night following the deed, the lover was astounded by an unexpected declaration from Gabrielle's lips.

As she spoke, she drew the betrothal ring from her tapering finger, and extended it toward him.

"I break the engagement between us, Marshall," she said, calmly. "I have a mighty work to perform, and I would be entirely free."

"Gabrielle, you act hastily," cried the young man, in a voice tremulous with pure emotion. "Do not tear yourself from me! Go with me to the altar now, and your life-work shall become mine. We will hunt the masked one down, and together we will bring to justice the villain who struck the death-blow that fearful night."



ALL FOR GOLD.

the new-comer, in what appeared to be a disguised voice. "Casper Severn, I must have gold, and I came hither for a goodly heap of it, too."

"How much?" mechanically asked the miser, and he glanced at the chest which his terror-stricken hands had overturned and scattered the bright idols over the stones.

"How much?" echoed the man, with a faint chuckle. "But very little. Ten thousand or such a matter."

"Ten thousand!" cried the old miser. "What! man, do you want to beggar me? Your demands are exorbitant; you shall not have a dollar, God help me if you shall!"

"Not a dollar, eh?" cried the wearer of the mask. "Well, we'll see!" and with the last word still quivering his lips, just visible under the dark cloth, he darted upon old Casper like a jungle tiger.

"Give me the gold!" he cried.

"Never! My heart is in these chests, and when you take my gold you take it."

"Then I'll take that auriferous organ!" hissed the murderer, and with his left hand he clutched Casper's throat and lifted him from the floor.

"Ha! I know you!" cried the miser. "I thought you were not coming back, but the devil sent you here, Hyat!"

That strange Christian name was the last word Casper Severn ever spoke, for he dropped from the villain's hands, and his heart's blood reddened the golden dollars on the floor.

The murderer spurned his ailed victim and helped himself to the gold. But seven thousand dollars rewarded his deed, and he could not find the keys to the other safes, nor could he force the locks.

He was terribly disappointed, and with angry curses at what he denominated the devil's luck, he disappeared as noiselessly and mysteriously as he had entered.

He had scarcely vanished before a figure clambered over a small safe almost hidden by the door of the large one, and dropped over the body of the murdered miser.

The light revealed the form of a girl, and as she turned toward the trail of the mask-wearer, her blue eyes flashed with the fire of vengeance.

"He is dead!" she said, in a sad tone. "He who has been a father to me for many years—he who never spoke a harsh word to the little girl whom he had called daughter, while he has spoken harshly to the whole world—I have seen basely slain. And I will avenge his death—I, Gabrielle Severn; and, father, over thee I swear never to taste the cup of happiness, so near my lips, until thy murderer has paid the terrible price attached to crime!"

A moment later she rose and closed the safe, and, as she left the room tenanted by the dead, her transcendentally beautiful face

city, perhaps, to his death among the wilds of the West; but I shall recall him now. Hyat Hilliard, what do you say? Base assassin, do you deny your heinous crime? Speak!"

He could not speak; his tongue seemed frozen to the roof of his mouth, and, with a mighty effort, he turned and started for the cathedral door.

But strong arms encircled his body, and a few minutes later stone walls encompassed him.

When he came to himself he did not deny the crime. He told how he had disguised himself and entered the miser's house that tempestuous night, and how he had sought to wed Gabrielle that he might rob her of the riches which good locks had kept from his clutches.

He died in his cell by his own hands, and a messenger brought sun-burned Marshall Whirley from the Far West to the sunny city, and to the arms of a beautiful woman whom he soon afterward called wife!

Forecastle Yarns.

BY C. D. CLARK.

IX.—A DUEL ON THE ICE.

WALLACE WADE was first-mate of a brigantine employed in the seal-fishery in the far northern seas. A man of nerve and courage, young, strong and imbued with a strange enthusiasm in the life he led. And he was loved by all the crew save one, and that one a dark-browed Swede, called Alec Thorwaldsen—a man to remind you irresistibly of the old Vikings, to whom fighting was a pastime, not a toil. In the course of his duty, Wallace had been forced to punish this man for a breach of ship discipline; and, although the sailor had yielded, it was with an ill grace, and the crew whispered among themselves that Thorwaldsen would "serve out" the mate for the insult, should the chance ever occur.

lay down my musket, and only keep my knife; you do the same."

Wallace read in the glittering eyes of the man that this was the only safe course, and he laid his musket beside that of the Swede, and the two walked some distance further to a place where the ice was level. The young mate was thinking over the chances. He knew that the Swede was possessed of a wiry, muscular frame, and that he must put forth all his powers to overcome him; he chose rather to trust to that than to the knife.

"Look here, Thorwaldsen," he said; "if we are to fight, let us fight like men, with our fists, sooner than trust to these tooth-picks. What do you say?"

"Dare you do it?" cried the Swede. "Then throw your knife away, and I will do the same."

Both men flung away their knives, stepped back a pace, and then rushed at each other with the fury of tigers. In an instant Thorwaldsen was down, his face bathed in blood, but sprung up again and rushed, with renewed fury, upon the mate. But he found that he had done wrong when he flung away the knife. Wallace was an adept in the art of self-defense, and science will always tell in such a struggle against brute force. Three times did the Swede attempt to close, but as often as he did so he went down before the sledge-hammer blows of his young antagonist.

"You had better give it up, Alec," laughed Wallace, who had not as yet received a scratch. "You are no match for me at this kind of play."

"You have deceived me," shrieked the Swede. "Oh, if I had my knife!"

But, Wallace stood between him and these weapons. Alec ran backward as if to make a new assault, but, turning suddenly, he began to run at the top of his speed. Wallace sprung after him with a cry of rage, for he knew that fair play was at an end, and that the wretch was running for the muskets, which still lay upon the ice. Away they went, straining every nerve to be first at the goal, but the Swede had the start, and stooping, raised the loaded musket and pointed it at the heart of the mate.

"Now, who is conqueror? Now who triumphs? I will have the best blood of your heart."

Wallace Wade felt that his hour had come, and, folding his arms, looked his enemy proudly in the face.

"You are a coward, Alec Thorwaldsen," he cried. "I knew that you dare not fight fair."

"Get down on your knees and beg for mercy. Perhaps, if you beg loud enough, I may yet spare your life."

"Fire, you coward!" hissed Wade, "but, if you miss me, we be to you!"

"I shall not miss," replied Thorwaldsen, as his eye glanced along the brown tube. "Prepare to die."

Wallace closed his eyes, with a silent farewell to his home among the New York hills, and a thought of one fair girl who would weep for him, when he heard a shriek of agony from Thorwaldsen, and saw him struggling in the embrace of a huge white bear, which had come out suddenly upon him from the jagged ice-floe behind, while another was just clambering over "H!"

Turning upon his heel, he fled back over the track he had lately pursued, and half an hour later fell in with a party of sailors who had come out in search of him. They turned back, and, after a battle, the bears were slain and the mangled form of Alec Thorwaldsen rescued. They made him a grave in the face of a lofty glacier amid the eternal winter of that silent sea, and there his bones still rest. Wallace Wade never forgot that hour, or the sanguinary ending of his duel on the ice.

Beat Time's Notes.

My chickens are in a high state of discipline. They never have the gaps until they go to bed. In the morning they rise, wash their faces, comb their heads with their own combs, and clean their teeth. They are most at work when they are laying around, and they never waste any time. They are all taught to work on their hind-legs and to read without the aid of spectacles. When the weather is very cold, they wear mittens on their hands and have their ears muffled up. The best breed is what was hatched from a dozen hard-boiled eggs.

My old uncle was the most careful man I ever saw. In chewing tobacco he would always exercise discretion and spit on the dark spots of the carpet, no matter where he was; and so polite that a man in a crowd stood on his most favorite corn for half an hour until he sent for a friend to come and introduce him, so he could tell him to get down off of there.

Young man, do the very best you can to maintain whatever position you may occupy. At school, when, by great perseverance and hard study, I arrived at the foot of my class, I never allowed anybody to crowd me down, but stood there, with the most heroic firmness, and won great notoriety. I am sure I was smarter than the master, for he always said he couldn't teach me anything.

When I was young, I used to write regularly for the *Atlantic Monthly*. I wrote a good deal for it. I was considered a very prolific writer. When I quit writing for it they missed my contributions greatly, although they never published any thing I wrote.

A YELLOU was arrested in New York, the other day, for stealing a watch, and sentenced to Penitentiary for one year; he tried to get off on the plea that he wanted to get put in jail over night so as to write an article on that institution. They gave him plenty of time.

I FEEL so sorry for the fellow that picked my pocket-book last night, that, if he will send me his address, I will send him a little money. I hate to see anybody so disappointed.

MARINE ANATOMY.—The arm of the sea, the body of water, the bosom of the ocean, the mouth of the bay, the face of the deep and the lap of the waves.

At the rate of three feet to the yard, how far will you have to run to catch thunder?

OTHER—a lodge in some vast wilderness.